

BLUES TURNAROUNDS | GYPSY JAZZ | WIN A TAYLOR 517E

ACOUSTIC GUITAR

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2019 | ACOUSTICGUITAR.COM

5 SONGS TO PLAY

DIRE STRAITS
SULTANS OF SWING

PETE SEEGER
QUITE EARLY MORNING

OSCAR ALEMÁN
YOU MADE ME LOVE YOU

AND MORE

STAGE-READY

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CORT GOLD MINI F | BLUE EMBER MICROPHONE

A woman with dark skin and short hair, wearing a brown long-sleeved shirt and a colorful patterned apron, is kneeling in a forest. She is holding a small green sapling with both hands, preparing to plant it in the soil. Another person's hand is visible on the right, also holding the sapling. The background is a lush, green forest with sunlight filtering through the trees. The image has a white wavy border at the top and bottom.

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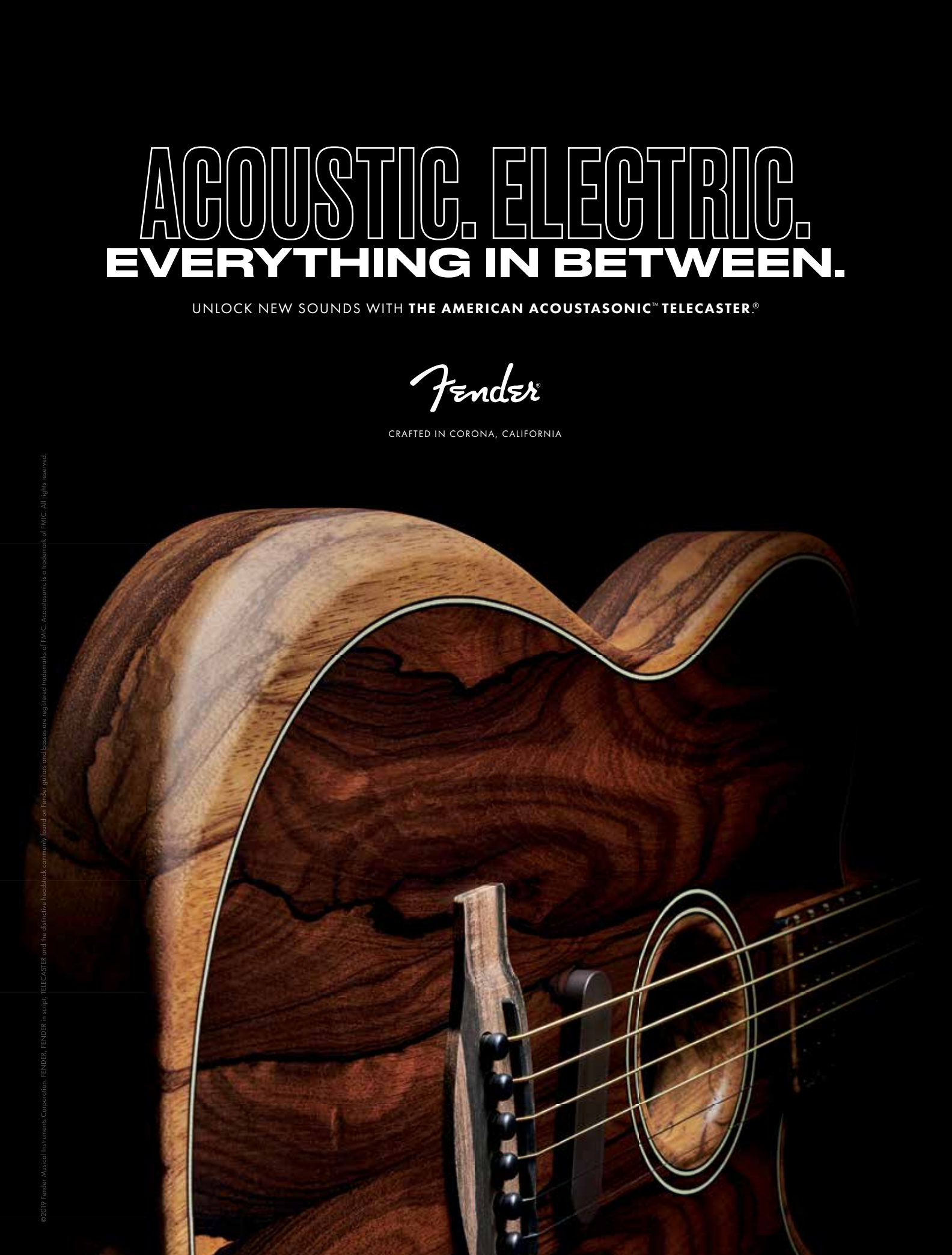


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(L to R) Ellis Paul, Chris Robley, Maya de Vitry, Peter Mulvey, Kaia Kater, and Korby Lenker



JEFFREY PEPPER RODGERS

'Folk music is a calling. Otherwise, why would we put up with all of it? It's just something in you that you have to do. That's what makes it special.'

KORBY LENKER
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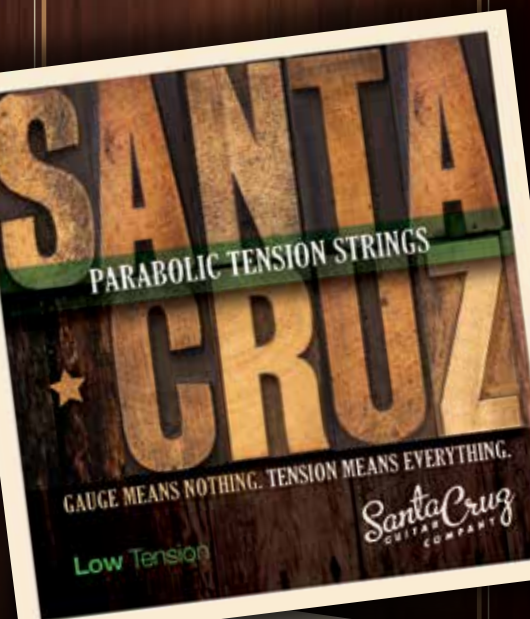
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SHEERAN BY LOWDEN S02

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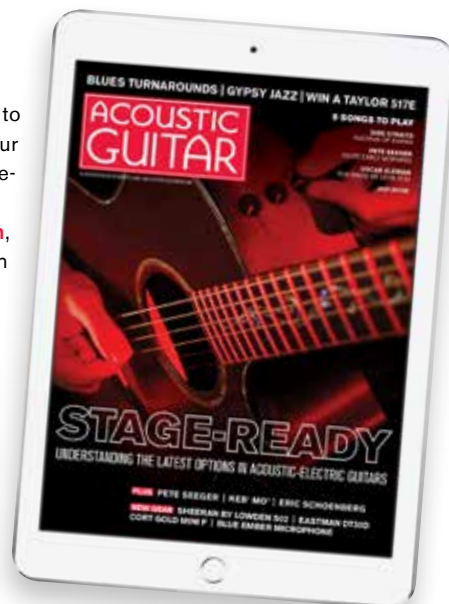
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THE FRONT PORCH

Pete Seeger



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Pete Seeger was both a song leader and a leading light in the world of music, as Jeffrey Pepper Rodgers' portrait beginning on page 40 shows ever so clearly and lovingly. In this centennial year of Pete's birth, so fraught with contention and division in our society, it's wise to heed his message about the power of song and singing to bring people together, to shine a light on truth, and to heal divisions.

Pete Seeger led by example. He was an activist in the truest sense. I have many memories of hearing him in action, first as a child accompanying my parents to concerts benefiting various civil rights organizations, and later as a teenager on my own. Most vivid is the September 24, 1965 "Sing-in for Peace" at Carnegie Hall, the first major concert organized in protest of the mushrooming Vietnam War. More than 60 artists performed for an audience of over 4,000. I can't remember exactly what time the show ended, but it was late. Pete Seeger wasn't done, though. He bounded down from the stage, still playing his long-neck five-string banjo, marched up the center aisle of Carnegie Hall's orchestra section, and invited the audience to follow him on an impromptu anti-war demonstration. So off we went into a late Friday night on a still-crowded 57th Street, east two long blocks to Fifth Avenue, and then straight down Manhattan's mercantile artery to the folk music mecca of the world, Washington Square Park, singing all the way. I think the party broke up around 5:00 a.m. (The event was so extraordinary that for many years afterward, I doubted my otherwise sturdy memory, but recently Happy and Jane Traum confirmed for me that it did really happen!)

That was classic Seeger: Why preach to the choir in a concert hall when you could share your message in person with the people of the

largest city in the world? It was a message of peace on that occasion, but for Pete peace was indissoluble from a sense of rootedness, community, and human connection.

A year after that historic concert, his message found totally new expression near his own home in Beacon, New York. Despairing over the pollution of the Hudson River, Seeger announced plans to "build a boat to save the river." Along with friends and neighbors, he believed a majestic replica of the sloops that sailed the Hudson in the 18th and 19th centuries would bring people to the river where they could experience its beauty and be moved to preserve it. Three years later, the 106-foot *Clearwater* took its maiden voyage—part floating science classroom, part messenger of the nascent ecology movement, part tangible evidence of the local community's love for its precious waterway. The launch of *Clearwater* would prove to be the first step in a decades-long process that ultimately restored New York's once majestic river.

When Pete passed away in early 2014, a song of his came immediately to my head, one he had composed in 1961 after attending a friend's funeral and lamenting that he had not had just the right song for that occasion:

*To my old brown earth, and to my old blue sky,
I now give these last few molecules of "I."*

Look up the rest of the lyrics yourself. They're perfect as a song and as an expression of the man. But first read Jeff's portrait of real leadership in action.

—David A. Lusteran, Editor
David.Lusteran@Stringletter.com



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FEEDBACK

TRIO TALK

As a senior in high school, in 1969, I wanted to learn to play the guitar to impress two people: a tenth-grade girl and John Lennon. To accomplish this I bought a guitar, and my cousin gave me an album, *Sing a Song with the Kingston Trio*. It was essentially a karaoke version of their hits, including “Tom Dooley,” “Greenback Dollar,” etc. There were lyrics and chords with chord diagrams (including the dreaded F major) to accompany the vocal tracks. Now, 50 years later, I am still playing these songs and many others. Thanks for the article. (The girl and I had a great year and remained friends. I never had a chance to meet John.)

—Jack Sclar, Frederick, MD

Although much of the info was already familiar to me, I commend the author on his well-done presentation of the Kingston Trio, especially his introductory personal reminiscences. Not only was I a fan of the group from the year of their first LP, but like Bob Shane (né Schoen), my first

instruments were a soprano and then a baritone ukulele, and my repertoire included folk and calypso songs from their pre-Guard years. And the '50s “folk group boom” surely influenced my first guitar purchase, a Martin 00-18G, in 1960.

—Bob Schoen, via Facebook

The reference to John Stewart’s contributions to the Kingston Trio seem to be just a brief breath of air. His influence in the Trio, and his talent as a writer and as a solo performer are often overlooked. He’s just the guy who replaced Dave Guard! His contributions are often forgotten, save “Daydream Believer.” His wife, Buffy Ford Stewart, not only carries on John’s legacy, but her own as well. I do believe that she had some influence within the Trio, although not as an onstage presence. John Stewart deserves much more attention than he is given.

—Norm Siegel, via Facebook

CAPO COUNSEL

I have been playing 12-string guitars since 1963,

and I have found that using a capo has always been more of a pain than simply transposing. After reading your article on capos (May/June 2019), I found one that should be in every 12-string player’s arsenal. It’s made by G7th and designed specifically for us 12-stringers. Its pad has a toothlike shape to it that accommodates the different sizes of strings in the E, A, D, and G bouts. I’ve used it on several of my 12-strings and it is simply amazing.

—Timothy C. Lee, Evergreen, CO

WATCH AND LEARN

I realize how much mail you must get (sorry), but after getting your magazine for two years, I just discovered all the videos behind the lessons/articles. Wow! Makes a huge difference. I save every copy, so now whenever I get stuck on something, I can just log on and get un-stuck. Just wanted to thank you.

—Sue G., via email

We want to hear from you! Share at Editors.AG@Stringletter.com and facebook.com/AcousticGuitarMagazine

CORRECTIONS In the September/October 2019 issue, on page 79, the country musician Bobby Bare’s surname was misprinted as Ware. Our apologies to Mr. Gayle Dean Wardlow, co-author of *Up Jumped the Devil: The Real Life of Robert Johnson*, for misstating his gender in the September/October 2019 issue.

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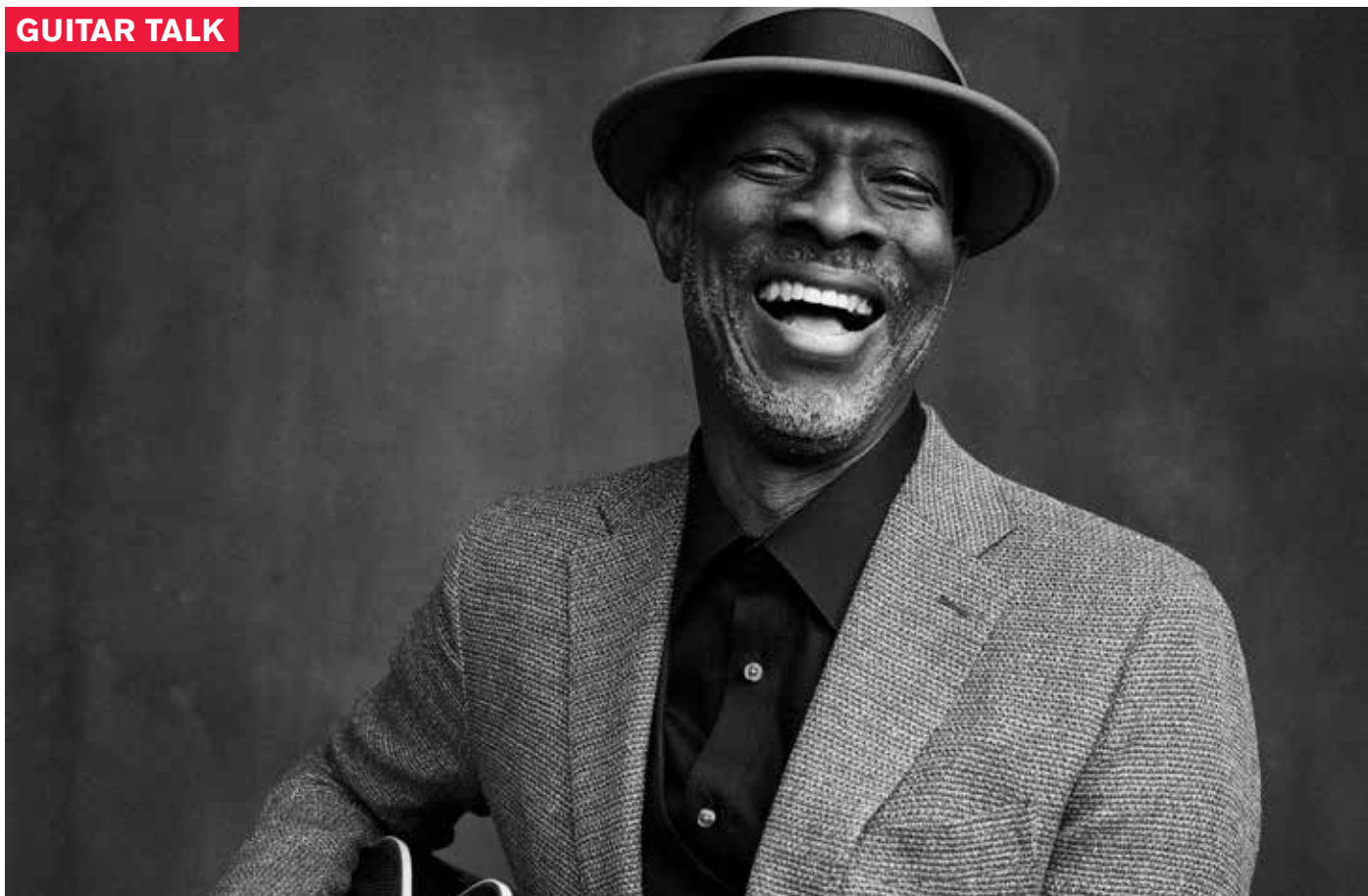
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Keb' Mo's 'Oklahoma'

The acoustic evolution of a modern folk-blues legend

BY JAMES ROTONDI

“We’ve become complacent,” sighs Kevin Moore, aka Keb’ Mo’, the multiple Grammy Award-winning American blues artist who also counts collaborations with Taj Mahal, Jackson Browne, and Bonnie Raitt among his many golden moments. “But see, I grew up in the ’60s,” explains the gregarious 67-year-old, who’s just released his first album since 2014, the wide-ranging *Oklahoma*, “and the art of the protest song is different now than it was then. These days, a protest song can be more about bringing forth information and creating awareness. Plus, we need to recognize that, especially in terms of ecological problems—like the ones I address in ‘Don’t Throw It Away’—although we may protest, we’re also very much part of the problem. So, a protest song is a very fine line.”

That said, even on an album featuring some of his most moving personal lyrics in

“The Way I,” Moore certainly pulls no political punches on tracks like “This is My Home”—in which he rages at the lack of compassion toward asylum seekers—or “Put a Woman in Charge,” which finds him dueting with Rosanne Cash on an insistent hand-clapper on behalf of gender equality. “Look, despite the fact that I’m on the left, I need to understand that some portion of my audience is not,” he explains. “So, my job really is to try to unite around things we can all agree on, rather than alienate on the things we can’t. This is also one reason why folk music has always been an effective vehicle for social change—it helps to frame things as storytelling.”

SPEAKING WITH SIX STRINGS

Moore’s rich, baritone voice delivers those stories with a raconteur’s skill and resonance,

not to mention a comedian’s faultless timing. And with *Oklahoma* guest artists like Cash, steel master Robert Randolph, Jaci Velasquez, and his wife, Robbie Brooks Moore, he’s surrounded by similarly gifted storytellers. Still, it’s his voice on the guitar, both acoustic and electric, that delivers the musical message—indeed, the entire musical legacy—that he perhaps almost accidentally found himself the ring bearer of back in the halcyon 1990s. With regular Grammy wins and nods in the Blues category, and a strong identification with acoustic and Delta blues traditions, some might be surprised to learn that Moore only found his calling as an acoustic stylist after playing electric guitar mostly for decades.

“Yeah, I actually began taking acoustic guitar seriously quite late,” Moore offers. “I started on acoustic, yes, but within two years

I was playing exclusively electric, and I didn't really look back until the early '90s, when I heard Big Bill Broonzy and Robert Johnson for the first time. Now, that just tore a hole in my entire universe. It was like, 'How'd did I miss *that*?!' Sure, I'd listened to B.B. King, Albert King, Freddie King, all my electric people, but I realized that I'd missed the boat on the acoustic stuff." Moore would build his acoustic fingerstyle technique by modeling the styles on Broonzy, Robert Johnson, Elizabeth Cotten, Mississippi Fred McDowell, and especially Mississippi John Hurt's explosive "Shake That Thing."

"Those artists are very much the basis of my blues fingerstyle playing," says Moore. "I'm a thumb-and-three-fingers guy, and I guess I move my right hand around the soundhole as I'm playing to get the sound I want; I do also palm-mute to some extent, because I think muting is so important—when you stop a note is just as important as when you start it, y'know?" Moore says he plucks the strings with the flesh of his fingertips, and keeps his right-hand nails quite short, in fact, barely using them at all. "I think of my technique as being like a bow-and-arrow approach," he suggests, "where I grab the string, pull, and let go. Maybe this is because the first guitar I learned on was a nylon-string classical guitar. But also, let's be honest—nails break, and I don't wanna be running to the store for press-on nails!"

OLD DOG, NEW TRICKS

While he's been honing his powerful, engine-room fingerpicking technique for years, Moore confesses that he'd never really paid much attention to learning how to *strum*, which meant that the kind of aggressive, Richie Havens-approved up-and-down strumming he performs on songs like "Put a Woman in Charge" required some serious woodshedding. "For that song, yes, I really needed to learn how to strum, man, because I've never been a good strummer! Sure, I've done a light strum before, but that big, bold sort of strumming is something I never really used. I now have a new respect for great strummers, people like KT Tunstall, for example. She *kills it* at strumming! After listening to her, I thought, 'Man, I suck at this!' I'd always just assumed that fingerstyle was the 'real' technique, and strumming was . . . well, just *strumming*."

While most of the songs on *Oklahoma* were written in standard tuning, Moore also experimented with DADGAD on both the album's slinky leadoff single, "I Remember You," and

the four-on-the-floor stomp of "Ridin' on a Train." Among the tuning's virtues, says Moore, is its tonal ambiguity, accomplished by its lack of a defining major or minor third: while open D would be D A D F# A D, giving a root-fifth-root-major third-fifth-root voicing, DADGAD is essentially a Dsus4 chord, with its unresolved quality. "I love that suspended sound," Moore smiles, "because when you use a slide to move that suspended fourth, you get this nice tension on every chord you arrive at. On 'I Remember You,' on the bridge, it just makes for a really nice, pleasingly haunting sound; there's no third defining the harmony or telling the listener how to feel."



TOOLS OF A BLUES MASTER

For his slide guitar work, Moore leaned on a National ResoRocket and a Republic Highway 61 resonator guitar. For those big strumming moments, he reached for a recent-model Gibson Advanced Jumbo, a Martin 00-18, and his own Martin HD-28KM signature model. "The HD-28 is a lot like a D-28, with that same big sound," says Moore, "but it's tricked out with a big, wide neck, which is much more suitable for fingerpicking, especially for players with big hands, like me. But by and large, most of the guitar parts on the album were done with my 2006 Gibson Keb' Mo' Bluesmaster acoustic, which was one of the earliest production models. That guitar truly is the engine of the whole album. I have three of them here at my studio, but the one I take on the road with me is the one that gets played the most, and has the most character, because it's my road dog."


Like his signature Martin, the Keb' Mo' Bluesmaster—modeled after small-bodied L-series Gibson acoustics of yore and inspired

by an Epiphone Bluesmaster that was stolen from Moore years ago—boasts a wide neck profile, and also features an L.R. Baggs Element pickup with soundhole-mounted volume control. "I love a wide neck, which is one reason I like the Bluesmaster so much," says Moore. "That neck is big and wide, almost like a classical guitar. I feel like it leads to not only better separation of the strings when you're picking, but also better separation between notes tonally. Since I play with the flesh of my fingers, it also allows me to really get in between the strings. And, honestly, I like the neck to meet the body at the 12th fret rather than at the 14th. Sure, you lose two frets of real estate up there, but there's not that much that's useful up there anyway," he laughs.

ACOUSTIC, UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Perhaps surprisingly for an artist so associated with legacy music and artists, Moore is extremely well-versed in studio equipment and recording concepts, and indeed, he recorded virtually the entirety of *Oklahoma* in his Franklin, Tennessee, home studio, where his first choice for an acoustic guitar microphone—his favorite for his vocals is the Shure SM57 or the Mikttek CV4—is equally surprising: "I'm telling you, man, for the way I play, there is no better acoustic microphone than a good ol' Shure SM57. I just like a nice, loud, up-close-and-personal acoustic guitar sound for my fingerpicking. The SM57 is perfect for me, because it doesn't pick up a lot of those higher-end frequencies like a really expensive microphone does. It just hears what you need to hear. That said, I think you do need a really good mic preamp on the back end of it. A few of my favorites are the Universal Audio LA-610 Mk II, the Rupert Neve Designs Shelford Channel, the Avalon VT-737sp, and API lunchbox preamps like the 512c."

For Moore, the intimate detail and nuance of the recording environment allows him to hear the deep characteristics of an acoustic in a way that's hard to rival. "Since an unamplified acoustic guitar just isn't that loud normally, it's always amazing to have it miked up, have your best headphones on, move the mic around the neck joint and the soundhole to find that sweet spot, and suddenly be hearing all these incredible subtleties and overtones that you can miss just playing in your living room, y'know? That's why, while the engineer can certainly suggest where the microphone should be placed, it's up to the player to finesse that placement until he really arrives at the sound he's hearing in his head. I love that process." **AC**

A stylized illustration on a yellow grid background. A blue guitar neck with frets extends from the top left towards the right. A hand is shown in the bottom right corner, holding a blue harmonica. The text "DIY FOLK INC." is written in large, bold, blue letters with a white outline, positioned on the left side of the image.

DIY FOLK INC.

What does it take to survive and thrive as a folk musician in the stream

At the 2019 Folk Alliance International conference, held in Montréal in February, evidence of the vitality and diversity of the contemporary folk scene was everywhere, as nearly 3,000 attendees representing 47 countries crammed the Fairmont Queen Elizabeth hotel with acoustic guitars, banjos, mandolins, fiddles, and upright basses. Alongside legends like Buffy Sainte-Marie and performers who've been on the circuit for decades were swarms of young songwriters and bands eager to carry on the folk tradition and trade.

Exactly how or whether anyone can make a living in folk (or any kind of) music, however, is another question—especially at a time when streaming has upended the record business, replacing sales of physical product with fractions of pennies in royalties, and live entertainment competes with the infinite diversions of the shiny screen. What sustains grassroots music careers in this era? What kind of adaptations are artists making, and what changes are on the horizon?

To shed light on these questions, *Acoustic Guitar* invited six artists for a far-ranging

roundtable interview during the conference. All are performing songwriters who, not coincidentally, are involved in many other creative ventures. They include Ellis Paul, a veteran singer-songwriter, author, illustrator, and host of songwriting retreats; Korby Lenker, the Nashville-based writer of songs and short fiction who created *Morse Code*, the web TV series about the life of a struggling folk musician; Maya de Vitry, formerly of the Americana trio the Stray Birds, who relaunched this year as a solo artist; Kaia Kater, an up-and-coming young banjo player

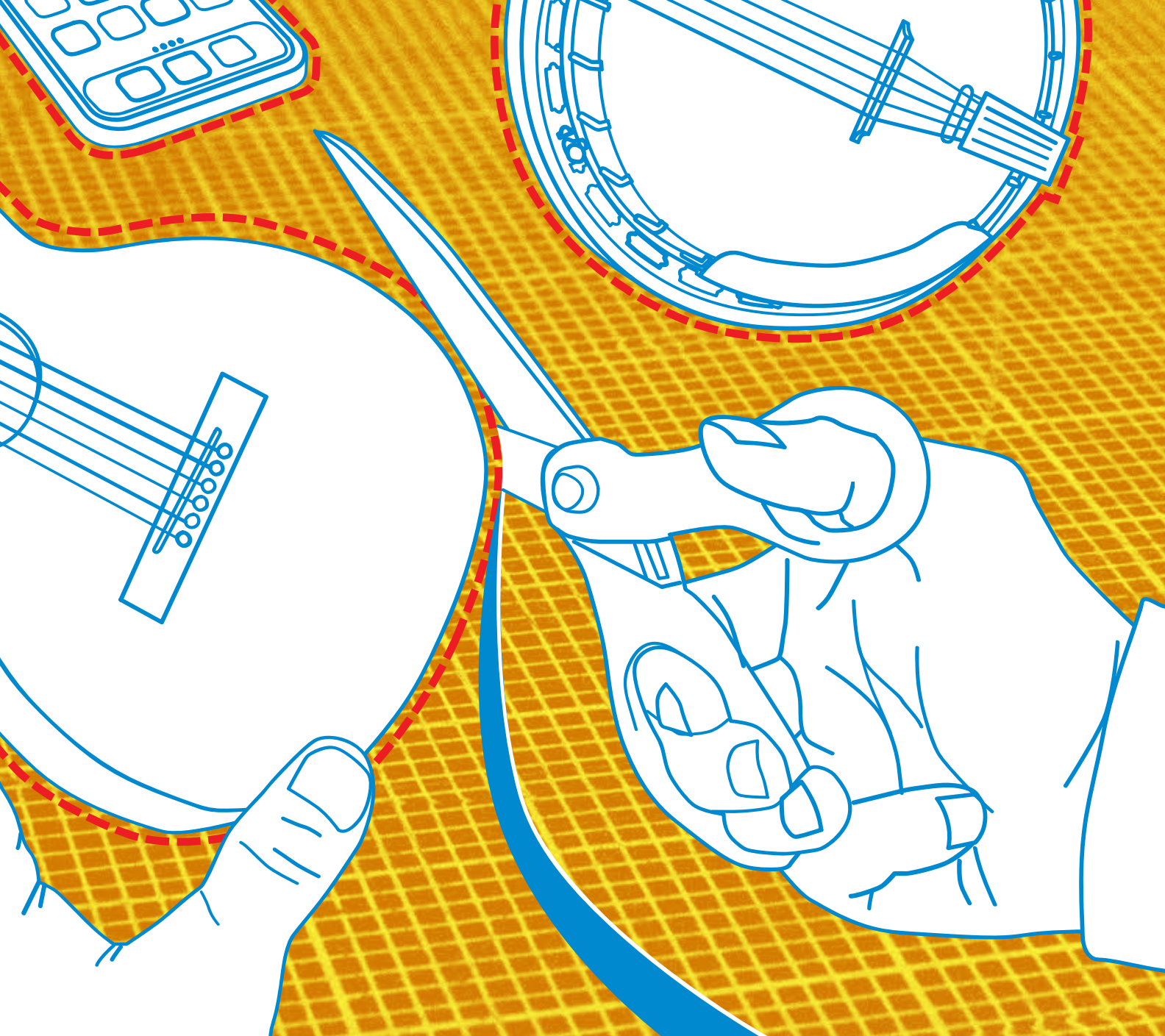


ILLUSTRATION BY BILL EVANS

ming era? Six enterprising artists weigh in. BY JEFFREY PEPPER RODGERS

whose latest album is on Smithsonian Folkways; Peter Mulvey, a hard-traveling favorite of the folk-rock scene since the early '90s; and Chris Robley, editor of CD Baby's DIY Musician blog, contributor to its companion podcast, and indie-pop songwriter.

This gathering took place just a few days after the glitzy spectacle of the Grammy Awards, which became the point of departure for our conversation.

Acoustic Guitar: After watching the Grammys, I was thinking about the mainstream music

industry vis à vis the folk business represented at this conference. How do you relate the two? Are they two ponds of different sizes, or completely separate entities?

Ellis Paul: Well, this is a cottage industry business to me. It's a little bubble compared to the bigger music industry. What we deal with are more interpersonal relationships. A lot of us are just running businesses right out of our garages, and there's not a lot of corporate involvement. I mean, if you look at the flannel in the lobby as people are walking in, compared to what

people are wearing at the Grammy Awards, it's just a whole different language.

Chris Robley: I was reading an interview last week with the guy [Scott Cohen] who founded the Orchard [music distributor now owned by Sony]. He was theorizing about the next ten years of the industry and how it's going to have AI-created music and virtual reality concerts and the end of fan bases. And he was saying, if you can't fathom that, you are going to lose. And I was like, there's always going to be the counter to any of those tendencies, because

people want to make stuff and share it. And I don't know—if everything's made by computer, what the hell's the point of being alive?

Korby Lenker: I agree there will always be a percentage of the population that wants to hear an acoustic guitar and a song written well and sung well. The house concert industry is great evidence of that. The revenues might go down, but the basic unit of the artist is always going to be here. As time has gone on, we artists have had to get a broader skill set in terms of doing things that traditional managers or booking agents would have done.

I'd also say that in folk music, it's a slow burn going up and a slow burn going down. There's a longevity to this community that's exciting. I mean, there are people that have been coming here for 30 years. Twenty years from now, I'll probably be involved in Folk Alliance at some level, and I'll have these long-term relationships.

Maya de Vitry: It seems like there's a lot of societal pressure to grow exponentially: If you're going to create something, you might as well just do it in the biggest, fastest, most streamlined, most efficient way possible. When I see the Grammys, I think they're selling a lot of things other than music. They're definitely selling commodity and glamour, which is not what so much of creation is about for us. Most of our job isn't wearing gowns.

Kaia Kater: I read an interview with Gillian Welch about the song "Everything Is Free." She wrote it in Nashville right at the advent of Napster. It was a really heartbreaking song for her to write, and it was also the time when she and Dave Rawlings decided, "OK, we're just going to do this on our own." I thank her for that, and I think for the generation of musicians that I'm with, you can go your own way. You don't have to sit around and wait for this big record deal or for some white dude in a suit to say, "I like your music." You can do it yourself.

For me, whenever I get a little sad about AI mastering or the creation of robot songs, I feel like there is a freedom and a power in knowing that flame will never really extinguish, and you'll find a way to make it work.

AG: Anything to add, Peter?

Peter Mulvey: Well, the way we all wear 15 hats now makes me wonder how I missed the scene in this movie where Bain Capital bought everything, the folk industry, and determined that that we would need to do more with less for the shareholders [laughter].

On the other hand, it's still a privilege to do the thing, and it's pretty easy to do the thing. If you just go out there and play music for people, you'll get an audience together. And once you have an audience, you're kind of unassailable. You're in the undergrowth. OK, Metallica is not making nearly as much money from the sale of plastic CDs as they were a decade ago, but my life hasn't changed. I'm just driving a car to the next gig and playing a show.



Ellis Paul

AG: As you've already mentioned, most people in this community do everything themselves—booking, promotion, putting out records. Does this era favor artists who are entrepreneurial?

de Vitry: In the last couple of months of starting to think about how to release music on my own, I've been listening to a lot of business podcasts—not music business, but entrepreneur business podcasts, just to broaden my perspective of how many hats people wear when they start a business.

Lenker: There are a lot of self-starters in this community, for sure, and a lot of self-promoters. Sometimes it's funny to watch—and I do it as much as anybody else—how much you have to be like, "I'm still here!" That's a hard corner to turn if you're an introverted type, which I am, because you just want to do your art and be recognized for it. It's kind of an annoying necessity. Sometimes when I post an Instagram I'll say, "Oh my God, this is my job now." But it is. That's the trade-off.

Kater: I'm in that same space of, I create my music, and all I want to do is get to where I can play music in front of people. That place is peaceful for me. But there is this whole other side of Instagram and Facebook and social media, and I am uncomfortable about it. I'm quite reticent to share any details about my



Kaia Kater

personal life because I feel like that is mine, and for my sanity there needs to be a clear demarcation between the image that I project and my personal life. But then I feel like, well, am I not being authentic enough? Am I just posting about shows and not posting things that people really find interesting?

So I go back and forth on that, and I think it's a constant negotiation. The things that make me feel healthy—like reading a book or talking to a friend or, really, anything that's not on my phone—make me feel like an individual that's capable of creating. I do find social media draining sometimes. I think a lot of people do.

Paul: I feel like I'm running a media company now. I came out of the '90s, and I had a record deal and seven albums. There was a filter system. A record deal was the only way to have a career as a musician at that point—until Ani DiFranco kind of broke the mold [by starting her own label]. But now you're the record label, and you're the manager. Even if you have those people in your life helping you out, you're still taking on so much of it. In the last year I made a decision: I'm no longer a songwriter; that's just one aspect of this media company. I'm creating music and books and online content.

You know, all I did in the '90s was travel and write, travel and write, travel and write. And now I've got cameras and microphones in my home, I have lights, and I'm producing this swath of things. It's just the new way. Everybody is multitasking just to create a future for themselves.

AG: That leads into my next question. Do you see having ventures beyond performing and recording as a necessity these days?

Robley: I think so, and that's good and bad. I feel like there was a lot of comfort in, I've got to sell a CD; I sold a CD; my job's done

until I put out another CD. There's a certain reliability in the economics of that. And now, as you're saying, it's very scattered. The flip side, though, is a lot of CD Baby artists will use singles as a chance to launch merch products, and they'll use Printful or some print-on-demand thing so there are not a lot of out-of-pocket costs for trying five different T-shirt designs with lyrics from the song. So there are way more opportunities to monetize the fan connection instead of just, "here's my CD; two years later I'll be back with another one." At the same time, what a pain in the ass to have to manage all that and constantly create stuff.

AG: Maya, do you think about outside projects like that?

de Vitry: For me, it's always something that's not related to music, like I really am enjoying having a part-time job [at a Starbucks in



Korby Lenker

Nashville]. It clears my head. I go and I clock in, and it's been really grounding for me.

Whatever you need to do, I think it's just important that we get rid of any shame about doing something other than pure art all the time. If we feel like we need outside business people to swoop in and validate us and give us permission to create, we might lose some of the essence of what we really want to be doing anyway.

Lenker: There's tremendous freedom in the part-time job. When I first moved to Nashville, I had records [out] and toured before and thought of myself as an artist and musician. I had a label deal for a short time in Nashville, and it all imploded and suddenly it was like, you're either going back to where you came from or you're getting a job. It was really hard to turn that corner in my mind, but I ended up

parking cars for three-and-a-half years at a hotel, and it was the best creative time in my life. I wrote all these stories, and I had a book published. I was super depressed in a way, but there was so much creative freedom. People don't ever talk about the part-time job because there's some stigma.

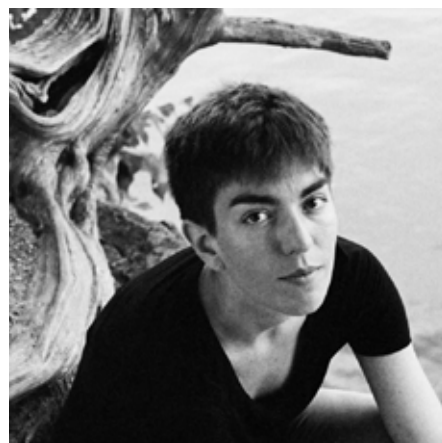
de Vitry: Stigma would be the word. But so many great artists and authors and creators have been bankers or English teachers.

Mulvey: Williams Carlos Williams was a physician. Wallace Stevens was an insurance executive. Ted Kooser was an insurance executive.

Robley: This is one thing I find so healthy about the poetry world. There's no way to be a professional poet, so you are a teacher or an accountant or whatever. Because there's no way to ever make a living at poetry, it can be what you need it to be.

When [music] is your whole identity and your reality doesn't match your ambition or what you think it should be, then that's a recipe for a lot of bitterness, too. I think people burn out really quickly from that.

AG: Let's talk a little more about records. How viable is it for you to make and sell physical recordings at this point?



Maya de Vitry

Mulvey: My audience is old enough that some of them actually still buy CDs, although I get the impression that they're buying them as a memento from me—that's not how they get their other music. But I like the form. I like to have a collection of about a dozen songs that's about a given thing. It's an antiquarian impulse, I suppose, but it's a cool form. A collection of songs is a thing the way a novel is a thing, the way a short story is a thing, the way a painting is a thing.

Robley: Though it could be more like a Dickens novel, where the songs come out over the course of two years and then later you package your favorite ten. Also, you could start that whole process and say, for the next two years I'm going to release a bunch of singles and they will all have this constraint, so it still feels of a piece.

Lenker: That's what I'm doing with my web series; I release a new song with every episode. Once the whole thing is done, we'll put out an album.

I think people still care about albums, and even the traditional music business still cares. You're not taken as seriously putting out a single as you are putting out a record. You don't get the media attention. NPR First Listens are important to an artist's career. But, yeah, the idea of going into the studio and recording 12 songs, paying and doing a Kickstarter and hiring the publicist is like, I can't even.

Mulvey: That's hilarious, because the scripted narrative television show with a single, etc., is its own enormous thing [laughter].

Lenker: Shifting problems.

Paul: What I did on my new one [*The Storyteller's Suitcase*] is create a 36-page, CD-size book. I'm like Peter—my audience is probably about the same age as yours and they're still buying CDs, but it's maybe 25 percent of what it was even five years ago at shows. Instead of going to a show maybe hoping to sell 20 or 30 CDs, if you break ten, you're having a pretty good night. So what I did was create a better memento by having all the lyrics and the back-story on all the songs.

AG: Kaia, do you feel like your new solo record [*Grenades*] is a viable product in itself?

Kater: I don't know. I haven't really thought of it that way. For me it was just, I have this collection of songs that I feel belong together. The idea of a single is more foreign, but not something I'm opposed to. I've started printing vinyl recently, which has been selling better. CDs don't really sell as much. The younger fans that I'm getting have definitely heard of me on Spotify, and the way that monetizes is just for them to buy a ticket to a show.

Robley: I see this trend with Spotify where you have to feed the beast, similar to social media. In order for your stats to stay up, you have to release something every couple of months or whatever. Obviously, that's way

easier to do with singles. If you're trying to game the system and play according to the rules, then it makes more sense to put out a lot of stuff, more frequent releases.

Kater: Do you guys do Patreon [the subscription-based service for supporting creators]?

Lenker: It's a big part of my career now. I spend a lot of time encouraging people to support my Patreon to help underwrite the show. I think it's super worth considering for indie artists because, you know, they say the tail of the music business is thin now but long.

I don't do well on Spotify, and obviously I'm not famous at all, but I have enough fans in the world who just like what I do. That relationship is so important, and they will support you if you make it easy for them. I mean the buy-in for my Patreon is \$1 a month, and it's only been out for a year, but there are 240 patrons now. I get two or three a month, and sometimes it's \$1 or sometimes it's \$20 a month. That's huge for me. That's like somebody coming to see you every time you play and buying a CD.

AG: Maya, how do you look at your new solo album [*Adaptations*]?

de Vitry: It's interesting because when I was discovering songwriting for the first time, I was funneling it into being a band member mostly. I was doing that for a number of years, which meant that albums were patchworks of songs but not a whole vision of one voice or perspective. For me [the album is] a really exciting form right now. As far as releasing them, I feel a lot of hope in the fact that so many of my favorite albums, books, and movies are things that I didn't discover on the release day or the year or maybe even the decade that they came out. So I'm just trying to put out the truest thing I can. I'm trying to put something out there that may be meaningful for somebody if it finds them.

Robley: You're talking about the usefulness of your music over the course of your life and not needing something to hit right now. That is becoming more and more the case. With CD Baby, we'll write checks to artists and be like,



Chris Robley

who is this artist? Why all of a sudden are they making a bunch of money? And it's like, oh, the song they put out seven years ago ended up on some huge Spotify playlist. Or we'll license a song to HBO that is 15 years old. The age of the music doesn't matter anymore. It does [matter] to the press, but in terms of making money, it's so cool that as long as the



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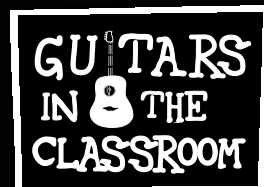


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music is good, it can find its moment way after it's been ignored for a chunk of time.

AG: Are there other aspects of the folk scene that you see as bright spots or reasons for optimism?

Mulvey: How good the people who are younger than I are. You know, a minute ago I was opening shows for Greg Brown and Patty Larkin and getting out there on the road and touring with Chris Smither. And now all of a sudden these young artists are opening shows for me, and so many of them are so good. It's as renewable a resource as creatures. Art is just something creatures make, and there are more creatures coming along.



Peter Mulvey

Paul: There are so many opportunities for music that's going to be around a hundred years from now. There could be this Emily Dickinson moment where a song that's a hundred years old is found on YouTube, and just because it speaks to some kind of beauty that's relevant then, it's going to have its day. And you think even of Woody Guthrie. Despite the fact that he was in a hospital [in the last five years of his life], his songs were going out in the world and creating this mythic kind of thing where now he's got a museum and all these people who follow him. That can happen for anybody that's walking these halls, because there's a place for this music. It can be found. It can be disseminated. And that's exciting for our kids and our grandkids and whoever comes along.

Kater: In the same way that this is a renewable community, I'm part of a writing group with a few friends. I'm a big fan of their work in their various projects, but this is just about whatever you're working on that week. I just find it's amazing to hear what your friends are thinking about and writing about and seeing

them grow, and them seeing you grow. That's what I'm excited about right now.

Robley: This music has a history and a kind of call to have meaningful content. I think EDM or a lot of pop doesn't take on the important things. If [meaningful content] happens, it seems it's either here or in hip-hop. I'm glad that folk is still a place for that, and it seems like more so in the past few years.

de Vitry: Just the persistence of everybody that I see here is really inspiring, and the growth, too, of a lot of my close friends. Also, the

vulnerability that we have to face within ourselves to even bring it out of ourselves into the world, I think is a gift. That is something we need—for people to be authentic with each other in their pain or in their joy.

Lenker: I mean folk music is a calling. Otherwise, why would we put up with all of it? It's just something in you that you have to do. That's what makes it special. That's why also [the folk mockumentary] *A Mighty Wind* was so successful, because it's sort of comic on some levels, too. It's our ridiculous commitment to what we do. **AC**

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Takamine CRN-TS1 (left) and Fender American Acoustasonic Telecaster



STAGE-READY

UNDERSTANDING THE LATEST OPTIONS IN ACOUSTIC-ELECTRIC GUITARS

BY JANE MILLER AND ADAM PERLMUTTER

Acoustic guitarists who have been around long enough can tell stories about the days of trying to be heard in a band: standing still in front of a mic while battling feedback or using the earliest of after-market pickup options and sounding like all wires and no wood. And the first acoustic-electric guitars—like the P-90-equipped Gibson J-160E that John Lennon made famous in his television appearances with the Beatles—didn't really sound convincingly acoustic either, nor did instruments like Martin's short-lived D-18E and D-28E of the late 1950s.

In the last few decades, pickups have come a long way for the performing acoustic guitarist. There are now seemingly endless choices of guitar/pickup combinations to suit the needs of players in a variety of styles. Instrument makers work closely with pickup companies to find the optimal electronics for their offerings, and gig-ready acoustic-electric guitars, while once specialty items, can be had at all price points.

Given a market teeming with attractive options, it can be overwhelming, to say the least, to find the acoustic-electric guitar that's right for your style and which sounds great acoustically while providing excellent reinforcement when needed. To help make your job a little easier, we've compiled an overview of acoustic-electrics introduced this year.

UNDERSADDLE OPTIONS

In the early 1970s, when country legend Glen Campbell requested an electric model from Ovation Guitars, the company placed a piezo-electric pickup—one that read the strings' vibrations and converted them to voltage—in one of its trademark round-backed guitars. Later that decade, Takamine introduced the revolutionary Palathetic pickup, which incorporated six individual piezo transducers under the bridge plate for optimal string separation

when amplified—an electronics system only available on a Takamine guitar.

The Palathetic ushered in a new era of plug-in-and-play, and today its original design remains virtually intact. Undersaddle pickups in general—those made from thin pieces of piezo-electric material, fitted in slots under bridge saddles—are now the most commonly used type, known for their clarity, especially in the high-end register. If you need that edge to cut through a band or a loud room, and also want good feedback resistance, this is a good choice.

Undersaddle pickups are often used in tandem with onboard preamps—more on this in a bit—but some acoustic-electrics use these pickups on their own. Among the chief benefits is that this pickup type is passive—no need for batteries—and it does not visually detract from the guitar in the way that some electronics systems do. Undersaddle pickups can be added to prized vintage guitars with little or no modifications (see sidebar on page 29), and using an external preamp can potentially offer more flexibility than one mounted to a guitar. But a drawback to a passive pickup is that the tone can vary, depending on what you plug into. Sitting at the affordable end of the spectrum in this category is Yamaha's recent Storia series of acoustic-electrics, aimed at entry level players and going for \$400 street.

It's far more common for new acoustic-electric guitars to feature active electronics systems, combining undersaddle pickups with battery-powered preamps. In the 1980s, Takamine pioneered a design that's now standard—an onboard preamp with sliding EQ controls, mounted on a guitar's upper bass bout, with an external battery compartment. Other systems are more discrete, with battery access inside the soundbox, the preamp installed out of sight in the endpin jack, and thumbwheel controls tucked under the top by the soundhole.

Active pickup systems have some nice benefits—you can control the guitar's tone without the need for external gear and get a reliably consistent sound when plugging into different amplifiers or PA systems. Naturally, plenty of new acoustic-electrics with active pickup systems were introduced in 2019.

At the lower end of the price spectrum, Martin unveiled the 000CJr-10E (\$599), an auditorium-sized cutaway with Fishman's Sonitone. This popular electronics package includes thumbwheel controls for tone and volume. Martin also introduced its Modern Deluxe series of updated takes on classic designs. For about an additional \$289, each Modern Deluxe can be ordered with Fishman Matrix Infinity electronics, including thumbwheel tone and volume controls, as well as a voicing switch, which allows for either a bass boost or a flat response.

Gibson recently unveiled the G-45 Studio and Standard—sloped-shoulder walnut models, which at \$999 and \$1,299, respectively, happen to represent hard-to-beat values in American-made acoustic-electric guitars. Like the Martin 000CJr-10E, these Gibsons are outfitted with Fishman Sonitone electronics.

New acoustic-electrics by PRS also come standard with Fishman electronics. The SE T60E (\$1,049), for instance, uses PRS's hybrid X/classical bracing, which is said to allow the soundboard to vibrate more freely than traditional steel-string bracing—translating to a wider range of nuances, which are captured by Fishman's GT1, a combination undersaddle pickup and soundhole-mounted preamp.

Cort's line of affordable acoustic-electrics includes two new offerings, among others. Having a solid spruce Sitka top and EvoRose (a composite alternative to rosewood) back and sides, the MR720F (\$389.99) sports Fishman Presys electronics, with a three-band EQ, LED tuner, and phase control. The Gold Mini F (\$649.99) is a 3/4-size dreadnought boasting a solid Adirondack spruce top and Fishman's Flex Plus system, with a Sonicore under-saddle pickup and low-profile volume, bass, and treble controls (see full review on page 82).

Among Eastman's new offerings is the AC108CE-LTD (\$999), a 14-fret cutaway with a solid Adirondack spruce top that's equipped with L.R. Baggs' EAS (Element Active System) electronics, with a super-thin pickup that's designed to mirror the soundboard's vibrations and capture a wide range of nuances. This same system is standard on guitars by other makers, like Breedlove, which installs it in the Pursuit Exotic Concerto Prairie Burst CE (\$799) and other models.

Alvarez's new Artist Elite series includes affordable acoustic-electrics outfitted with L.R. Baggs' Element pickup and Stage Pro Element



Martin
000CJr-10E



Gibson
G-45 Standard



PRS
SE T60E



Eastman
AC108CE-LTD



Alvarez
AGFM80CEAR



Guild
F-512E Maple



Takamine
CRN-TS1



Taylor
K24ce

EQ. As seen on a model like the all-solid AGFM80CEAR Grand Auditorium (\$599.99), with its maple back and sides, the Stage Pro is an externally mounted preamp with a three-band EQ, built-in chromatic tuner.

Fans of the 12-string guitar celebrated the reintroduction of Guild's legendary maple jumbo model. While it's available without a pickup, an acoustic-electric version, the F-512E Maple (\$3,999) adds L.R. Baggs Anthem electronics—whose soundhole-mounted controls do not disrupt the beauty of the maple's figuring.

Some guitar builders of course supply their own proprietary electronics. Takamine, still a leader in this realm, introduced a handful of acoustic-electrics this year. For instance, the slope-shouldered CRN-TS1 (\$1,799), a 12-fret dreadnought with a torrefied spruce soundboard, is outfitted with Takamine's trademark transducer, as well as CT4B-II onboard electronics, an upper-bout mounted preamp with a three-band EQ, and integrated tuner.

From Taylor's Builder's Edition series, the all-koa K24ce (\$4,799), with the maker's new V-Class bracing, is equipped with onboard ES2 (Expression System 2) electronics. Three sensors sit behind the saddle instead of under it, catching the vibrations moving back and forth rather than up and down. At the other end of the price spectrum, the Academy 10e (\$649) sports Taylor's ES-B electronics, also using behind-the-saddle placement and onboard volume, tone, and tuner controls.

OTHER ELECTRONICS SYSTEMS

While the undersaddle transducer is the most common acoustic-electric pickup, another smart type is the soundboard transducer, which is usually mounted on the bridge plate. A pro is that this pickup type captures the motion of the guitar's top, for a woody sound; a con is that it can be more susceptible to feedback than the undersaddle variety. Then there's the internal soundhole microphone, often a mini condenser fitted inside the guitar, frequently used in tandem with an undersaddle or soundboard transducer. This type of solution can capture the sound of a guitar recorded in the studio.

While soundboard transducer and hybrid electronics systems (like an undersaddle pickup and soundhole mic combo) are less often factory-installed in acoustic-electric guitars than the standard undersaddle pickup/preamp set, there are plenty of good options out there—electronics that discourage feedback, at the same time promoting sounds that are free from the artificial, boxy qualities that are sometimes associated with undersaddle pickups.

A handful of guitars in Martin's midrange 16 Series—the D-16E, GPC-16E, 00-16E,

STAGE-READY

000-16E (\$1,699 each), and the D-16E Burst and OMC-16E Burst (\$1,899 each)—come equipped with Fishman Matrix VT Enhance electronics, made exclusively for Martin, which capture the longitudinal energy of the guitar's soundboard. The Enhance package is said to have a transparent tone and includes a unique tone control that boosts the treble and bass frequencies while cutting the mids.

Martin's Modern Deluxe series can be ordered with L.R. Baggs' Anthem system (an optional \$390), which includes an undersaddle pickup and proprietary condenser microphone, which is mounted to the bridge plate and positioned 3mm above the plate, such that it performs as if it were placed outside of the guitar in the studio. A mix control allows blending of the pickup and mic, so you can easily adjust the sound based on the size of the room or volume of the band. If you like clarity but also want the natural sound of wood, a system like this would be a good option for you.

In a completely different direction, Yamaha's recent TransAcoustic lineup includes acoustic-electric guitars with built-in effects. One of the latest additions to the series, the CSF-TA (\$699.99) is a parlor-sized instrument that when unplugged has natural reverb and chorus effects that can be called forth from a vibrating device inside the guitar. When the guitar is plugged in, these effects are amplified through Yamaha's SRT piezo pickup and System 70 TransAcoustic preamp.

Fender's American Acoustasonic Telecaster (\$1,999.99) is a hybrid guitar that incorporates three different pickup systems—a Fishman undersaddle transducer, Fishman Acoustasonic Enhancer, and Fender Acoustasonic Noiseless magnetic pickup, plus the Acoustic Engine, a processor. With this unique instrument, you can access all kind of classic acoustic tones—there are settings like “Sitka/rosewood dreadnought”—as well as electric sounds. This is obviously a good solution for a guitarist who must cover a lot of sonic territory in a single gig. And for those who prefer the looks of highly figured woods, the Acoustasonic Telecaster is now available in cocobolo, ziricote (\$3,299 each), and koa (\$3,999.99).

Of course, on paper and on the internet, it's easy to be wowed by the possibilities inherent to the latest acoustic-electric guitars—for both performing and recording purposes, such a far cry from the earliest examples in terms of sound and flexibility. But the best way to find what will work best for you is to try a bunch of different pickup types on guitars from various makers, as gear selection is such a highly personal thing.

AC



Taylor
Academy 10E



Breedlove
Pursuit Exotic
Concerto Prairie
Burst CE



Cort
MR720F



Yamaha
Storia



Martin
000-16E



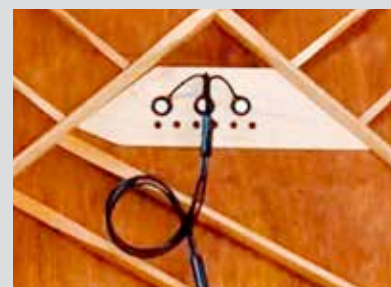
Martin
OMC-16E Burst



Yamaha
CSF-TA



Fender
American
Acoustasonic
Telecaster



NONINVASIVE SPECIES

Thinking about an aftermarket update to your custom concert rosewood-and-spruce beauty? If the sight of sawdust makes you queasy, you might not be able to bring yourself to add a pickup. On the other hand, it's no big deal if it just means widening the endpin hole a bit to install the jack. That's different from gouging out a hole on the side of your guitar for an onboard preamp. And if you don't want to modify your guitar at all, you can try the Vintage Jack (\$87.50), which will fit into most existing endpin holes (but does include a 1/8-inch output jack, as opposed to the standard 1/4-inch).

To amplify, say, your prewar Martin D-18, there are noninvasive pickup options available. K&K Sound's popular Pure Mini (\$99), for instance, is a passive solution consisting of three coin-sized transducers, which are adhered to the bridge plate. The transducers pick up sound from the wood, and experimenting with their placement can yield optimal results from your guitar. Positioning them slightly toward the treble side will offset a boomy dreadnought, for example.

When volume is needed, a magnetic soundhole pickup, with its typically fat, warm sound, is a smart option. While some models can be easily detached when not in use, others can be permanently installed, with the cable hidden inside the guitar and the jack sent through the endpin. A potential drawback is that soundhole pickups can sound less natural and more electric than other types. But this is balanced by the ability to be heard in a stadium in front of a loud drummer. Just a few good magnetic options include Bartolini's 3AV (\$120), DiMarzio's Black Angel (\$164.99), Fishman's Rare Earth (\$179.95), Seymour Duncan's Woody (\$59), and Sunrise's S-1 (\$310). —JM



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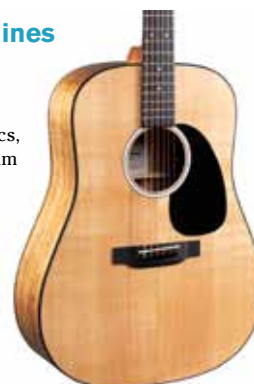


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MAJOR



**Django Reinhardt, his
disciples, and their hot brand
of acoustic jazz guitar**

BY PAUL MEHLING AND TOMMY DAVY

SWING



Quintette du Hot Club de France in 1939: (L-R)
Stéphane Grappelli, Eugene Vees, Roger Grasset,
Django Reinhardt, Joseph Reinhardt

In the 1930s, the Belgian-born guitarist Django Reinhardt and his violin partner Stéphane Grappelli created a new kind of small but mighty chamber music. Jazz Manouche or Gypsy jazz, as it came to be known, is a vibrant, irresistible pastiche of classical, Gypsy, dance music (think waltzes, polkas, tangos, etc.), and American jazz, blended into an acoustic all-string ensemble of lead guitar, violin, string bass, and not one but two rhythm guitars. Once you've heard it, you can't forget it, and it has something for all tastes: a little romance, a bit of mystery, and a lot of fireworks. But mostly it swings like mad!

Currently enjoying a seemingly never-ending resurgence, and gaining popularity year by year, Gypsy jazz has become almost a cult of devotees that you may have heard of—Adrien Moignard, Stochelo Rosenberg, Dorado and Tchavolo Schmitt, and others. In this feature, we'll trace the development of Gypsy jazz from its origins in 1930s Paris to its present status as a global phenomenon.

THE GENESIS

When you think of the legendary Django Reinhardt (1910–1953) and his close association with Gypsy jazz, do you know what molded the man who would not just pioneer the style but help revolutionize jazz guitar in general? First and foremost, Reinhardt had a rich level of musical appreciation, as did the many other innovators who would help create an entirely new style of jazz in France.

To place Reinhardt in context, we must first backtrack. Written accounts of Gypsy music throughout history have chronicled child prodigies and musicians of extraordinary talent. By the middle of the 19th century, the music would be elevated to high-society status in Hungary. Violinist János Bihari (1764–1827) would arguably be considered the first musical celebrity of the Gypsy people. The composer Franz Liszt wrote, “The tones sung by his magic violin flow on our enchanted ears like the tears. . . .”

Widespread acceptance in Hungary would set the stage for the spread of performing Gypsy musicians all over Europe. A young Django Reinhardt would have likely heard violinist Georges Boulanger (1893–1958) and other recording Gypsy musicians. Boulanger's 1920s recording of “Serenade Tzigane” could be the first instance of Gypsy music being fused with the jazz stylings of a big band. At the same time, Gypsy musicians all over Europe began performing salon music, which was a mixed variety of repertoire including classical, folk, and popular music of the day.

When he was a teenager, Reinhardt and his family first settled in the outskirts of Paris in the



Django Reinhardt with Duke Ellington, 1946

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austere La Zone and later near Porte d'Italie. Life for the Manouche in Paris was certainly melancholy, but despite great hardship, colorful and joyful music overflowed from the caravans. As a young musical prodigy, Reinhardt made a living for his family playing the six-string guitar-banjo—a simple and effective rhythm machine used commonly at the time.

During the late 1920s and early '30s, Spanish bandurria music was much in vogue. Through a chance encounter with Jean “Poullet” Castro—who was known as “Le Grand Gitan” among the music community in Paris—Reinhardt learned to play a steel-string guitar with a plectrum, as did Baro Ferret, who became both a friend and rival. Auguste “Gusti” Malha was a hero to the young Reinhardt. Surrounded by these guitar masters who were, like Andrés Segovia in the classical realm, bringing the formerly lowly guitar to the big show by using it as a soloing instrument, a young

Reinhardt began to find his voice. That much was already apparent in the first known recordings, made June 20, 1928, of Reinhardt with the accordionist Jean Vaissade.

The manner in which Reinhardt and others played the guitar is quite different from the approach that most of us have learned. It's a way of getting maximum tone and volume from the instrument, while allowing for the expressiveness that comes from sheer speed and wide timbral range. While much is made of Reinhardt's fretting hand—two of its fingers were famously paralyzed in a caravan fire when the guitarist was 18—the real power of his playing was in his picking hand. Reinhardt and his contemporaries played less like steel-string flatpickers than like mandolin, bazouki, and oud players. The Gypsy jazz picking technique involves a floating wrist, which does not touch the top of the guitar, allowing for maximum range of motion for the picking hand.

As witnessed on Reinhardt's 1930s recordings like "Limehouse Blues" (see full transcription in AG's June 2018 issue) and "Minor Swing" (appearing in the October 1999 issue), the guitarist's complete command of music, as well as his stunning technique, gave his genius the full opportunity to express itself. And of course the music reflected Reinhardt's free-spirited personality. Reinhardt was born with wanderlust and lived in complete freedom to go where he wanted, when he wanted, and do whatever he wanted—qualities found to some degree in many improvisers. He was undeniably at the top of this elite group.

DJANGO JAZZ

When Reinhardt first heard American jazz musicians like guitarist Eddie Lang, violinist Joe Venuti, and trumpeter Louis Armstrong, his improvisatory language—and, by extension, jazz guitar as we know it—was transformed. In 1931, Reinhardt met violinist Stéphane Grappelli, and encounter that would lead to the formation of Quintette du Hot Club de France.

Reinhardt and Grappelli's partnership, forged from a mutual fascination with the ultra-new and, dare we say, sexy sounds coming from the United States, would turn out to be one of the greatest collaborations in the history of jazz. As the story goes, Reinhardt heard Grappelli improvising a hot melody that was clearly borrowed from Louis Armstrong. Reinhardt—who worshipped Armstrong from the very first time he heard the trumpeter's Hot Five and Hot Seven recordings—jumped in to accompany the violinist, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Speaking the language of jazz together with a decidedly French accent and with Gypsy spirit and passion, as heard on recordings like "Nuages" and "Daphné," Reinhardt and Grappelli created a new kind of jazz that was all their own. They were in fact arguably the first jazz musicians outside of the United States to acquire their fluency in the language.

GYPSY JAZZ

In the wake of Reinhardt's death in 1953, a new wave of close collaborators, disciples, and fans dedicated their efforts to paying homage to his legacy. Gypsy jazz would continue to emanate from the bars of Saint-Ouen and Pigalle, in Paris. La Chope Des Puces (near where Reinhardt had lived) became a central meeting place for all who idolized the culture around the music of Jazz Manouche. Guitarist Maurice Ferret and Joseph Pouville played their nightly duets at Au Clairon Des Chasseurs, a restaurant in Montmartre.

Reinhardt is undeniably the spark behind the creation of Gypsy jazz—without him, the

BIG MOUTHS, LITTLE MOUTHS

THE IDIOSYNCRATIC GUITARS BEHIND GYPSY JAZZ

The distinctive sound of Gypsy jazz most often comes from Selmer-style guitars, as their clear, bell-like tones make them ideally suited to the music. This type of instrument was born in the early 1930s, when the Italian musician Mario Maccaferri designed a guitar for the maker Henri Selmer Paris to produce. The first Selmer-Maccaferri guitar was essentially a classical guitar built for steel strings, with a large D-shaped soundhole (*grande bouche*, meaning large mouth); ladder bracing on both its gently arched (bent, not carved) soundboard and back; and a wide, floating bridge.

Maccaferri only partnered with Selmer for 18 months, and after he left, the company made modifications to his design, most notably through the *Modèle Jazz*, or *petite bouche* (small mouth), with its reduced oval soundhole. Selmer ultimately produced its Maccaferri-style guitars for only 10 years. Thanks to the instruments' association with Django Reinhardt, not to mention their scarcity (fewer than 1,000 made), they're quite collectible, as are examples by makers like Busato and Favino.

If you're looking to explore Gypsy jazz, you needn't necessarily score a prized vintage guitar or a modern boutique example by a luthier like Shelley Park (see *Great Acoustics* on page 98). An instrument like the Gitane Cigano Series GJ-10 will give you an authentic sound for around \$500 street, while another good option, the Altamira M, will set you back around \$700. You might also consider Eastman's DM1 (around \$1,000), reviewed in AG's October 2018 issue. —PM and TD



Grande bouche: Bergen by luthier Hanno Kiehl, Norway



Petite bouche: Maccaferri O-type guitar by luthier Jürgen Lutschkowski, Germany

MAJOR SWING

music wouldn't have existed—but there are some notable personalities that helped to launch the current revival. Biréli Lagrène, who released his first recordings when he was a teenager in the early 1980s, has proven to be the (almost) reincarnation of Reinhardt himself. But Lagrène pushed himself further than the confines of Gypsy jazz. After moving to New York in the late '80s, he met and played with the fusion bassist Jaco Pastorius and has since continued to reinvent himself.

Similarly, Boulou Ferré, now in his late 60s, became a child star at 11 when he played his Charlie Parker-inspired lines on his guitar, while singing along an octave above. And Holland's Stochelo Rosenberg, with his fleet-fingered, lightning-fast playing, lit the torch that led us all into the 21st century while bringing along a touch of bossa nova to the genre.

Naturally, Gypsy jazz spread outside of Europe. But when I [Paul Mehling] started the Hot Club of San Francisco, in the late 1980s, I experienced more than a few difficulties. In an era before YouTube made it possible to master the guitar in any style, nobody knew how to play Gypsy jazz, and audiences were not at all

Simba Baumgartner



familiar with the genre. Though a select few listeners knew the name Django Reinhardt, nightclubs were reluctant to take up the large amount of space for a cumbersome name that was evocative only to those special people who knew of the Hot Club of France.

Thirty years later, the story is different. Annual concert series, like the Festival Django Reinhardt in France and the Django Reinhardt NY Festival, are dedicated to Gypsy jazz. The caliber of players is extremely high, and the

audiences are highly familiar with the music. In a double-reverse fashion, Americans continue to appropriate Gypsy jazz—the music that was originally created by European musicians copying American jazz greats—as do players around the world.

With guitarists like Simba Baumgartner (great-grandson of Django Reinhardt) and Stephane Wrembel exploring new directions, and a growing number of musicians taking up the Gypsy technique and repertoire, it's clear that the influence and inspiration of Reinhardt's music has had a lasting impact on our lives. The old adage that “good music never dies” certainly seems more true than ever.

Paul Mehling, the leader of the Hot Club of San Francisco, is a Bay Area-based guitarist and educator who has played a pioneering role in the Gypsy jazz scene in North America. hotclubsf.com

Tommy Davy is a Los Angeles-based Gypsy jazz guitarist who leads Trio Dinicu. Davy is also the owner of the boutique DjangoGuitars.com, which specializes in Gypsy jazz guitars and accessories. triodinicu.com

GET PUMPED

LEARNING THE RHYTHMIC FOUNDATION OF GYPSY JAZZ

The essence of Gypsy-jazz rhythm—*la pompe manouche* as it's known—is a sparse and swinging canvas of sound. Well-meaning players often misunderstand the basic rhythm of *la pompe* (which translates as “the pump”) and whack the second and fourth beats way too hard because they think that they hear it that way. Careful observation will show that this is not correct: The rhythm actually feels lopsided when you do this, like a person walking down the street with a rock in one shoe.

If anything, a great Gypsy rhythm has a broad footprint of a strum on beats 1 and 3. While it's true that the second and fourth beats are clipped or chopped, they're not accented. Try a basic four-to-the bar pattern on a Gm6 chord as shown in Example 1, using all downstrokes. Then, in Example 2, shorten beats 2 and 4 by releasing pressure on your fretting fingers. —PM

These examples are excerpted from Paul Mehling's Gypsy-jazz primer in the June 2017 issue of Acoustic Guitar.

Example 1



Example 2



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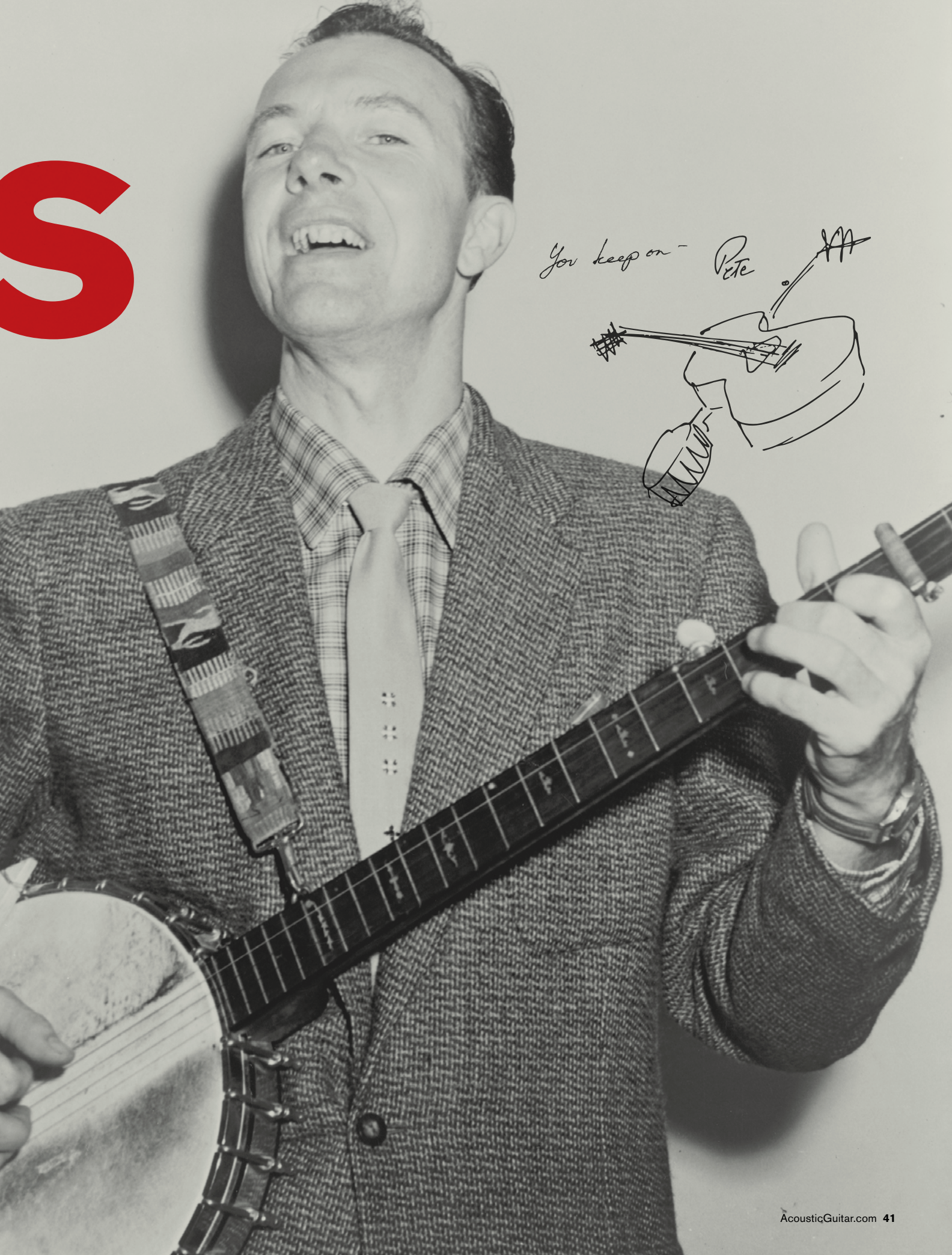
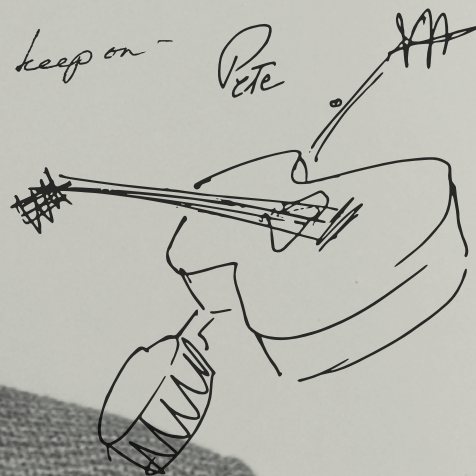


By Jeffrey Pepper Rodgers

**How Pete Seeger mentored and
inspired generations of musicians**

S

You keep on - Pete



Tony Trischka grew up with Pete Seeger's banjo ringing in his house, by way of his parents' records of the Weavers, the Almanac Singers, and Seeger's folk songs for children. In 1962, at age 13, Trischka started getting serious about wanting to play. So he got ahold of Seeger's seminal book *How to Play the Five-String Banjo* and decided to contact the man himself.

"I wrote a letter to 'Pete Seeger, Beacon, New York'—it was like writing to Santa Claus at the North Pole," Trischka recalls. "And I said something to the effect that 'You're the best banjo player in the world.'"

To Trischka's astonishment, a couple of weeks later came a handwritten reply. "Dear Tony," wrote Seeger, then 43 and a star of the ascendant folk revival. "Art is not a horse race, so I must disagree with you. There is no such thing as 'Best'—but I'm glad you like my music."

Trischka, who of course became one of the great banjo innovators of his generation, is far from the only aspiring musician to be stunned to receive a letter from Seeger. In 1970, as a college student in Minnesota, John McCutcheon was working through Seeger's banjo book but was stumped about how to frail, so he wrote the author for advice. Seeger not only wrote back, but said he was playing in Minnesota soon and could give a firsthand demonstration.

Hardly believing he'd received this invitation from someone who was drawing audiences of thousands, McCutcheon approached Seeger after the concert. "He was walking out and had his banjo over his shoulder," McCutcheon recalls. "He said, 'Oh, yes, yes, I remember you.' And with the crowd around him, he took out his banjo and said, 'You use the back of your fingernail.'" When McCutcheon asked how to learn more about the frailing style, Seeger suggested he go south—to the banjo's home turf in America.

"That was the very first time somebody said to me, you have to go where it is to get it," says McCutcheon. "After hearing this one more time from [musician and musicologist] Guy Carawan mere months later, I decided, OK, that's what I have to do. And nearly 50 years later, here I am, still on that odyssey."

It's a remarkable fact that one of the most influential musicians of the last century—as a banjo player, guitarist, songwriter, arranger, song leader, author, teacher, and activist—was also one of the most accessible. In addition to meeting people everywhere he traveled, Seeger got mail by the bushel from all over the world, and he made a herculean effort to answer every letter in longhand. As his fame grew, the job became overwhelming, and he

Dear Rik,

I wish I had an easy answer to your difficult question of how to make a living as a folk singer. I can only say that there is no exact way to do it. There are some thousands of people in the country who would like to. Down in Nashville they have a saying, "Keep your day job." And you might consider getting a job as teacher or something else that you enjoy. It might be working in the woods or wherever. Something that is good for the health—don't take a job that is going to kill you physically as well as spiritually. ~~Then~~ just take weekend jobs within easy driving distance.

I was doing this back in the early 50's and then decided to try and gamble on going and trying to sing at some college folksong clubs, and little by little I got more jobs. There wasn't so much competition then as there is now.

Some people go and sing in the streets of a big city. One of Toshi's schoolmates still does this. In between singing in the streets, though, she goes up to western New York State and picks grapes or other crops and sings for free with her fellow agricultural workers.

You could try teaching people. Lorre Wyatt does this--teaches guitar, teaches banjo, teaches anything he possibly can. My mother was a really very good violin player, but she didn't have the physical stamina to go out and give concert tours, and ended up teaching the violin for 60 years.

I think that one of the bad things about modern technological society is that people feel that they haven't "made it" unless they are well known outside their home village. Once upon a time, only a few kings and pirates were known out of their home village. Everybody else was quite happy if they could do a job, whatever it was, and be known by their neighbors as being a dependable worker.

tried to keep up by dictating letters to be typed, returning letters with responses in the margins, or sending apologetic form letters. Seeger's mission to answer his mail was not just a quirk of personality. It reflected the core beliefs of a man who dedicated his life, as he often put it, to planting seeds—in particular, encouraging others to make music and get involved in their communities.

This past May was the 100th anniversary of Pete Seeger's birth, an occasion marked by the release of the six-CD set *Pete Seeger: The Smithsonian Folkways Collection* (following similar collections devoted to the music of Lead Belly and Woody Guthrie) and a wave of tribute concerts and albums—including McCutcheon's newest release, *To Everyone in All the World: A Celebration of Pete Seeger*, featuring guests Tim O'Brien, Stuart Duncan, Corey Harris, Suzy Bogguss, and more.

The lead-up to the centennial got me thinking about all the anecdotes I'd heard from musicians about their letters and interactions with Seeger and how influential they'd been. I was fortunate, too, to have corresponded with Seeger as editor of *Acoustic Guitar* and interviewed him several times. So I began asking around for musicians to share their letters from Seeger, and I also gathered some stories from those who shared meals and stages and conversations with him, as recounted here. What's clear from all these communications is that although Seeger left us in 2014, the impact of his mentorship and example lives on in the music and musicians all around us.

KEEP ON KEEPING ON

Much of what Seeger offered musicians in his letters was simple encouragement to stay on the path—one of his typical sign-offs was "Keep on." And he often slipped in bits of advice. In the late '90s, Seeger replied to a letter from Josh Ritter, another college student and aspiring songwriter who'd sent him a tape, stressing in just a few words the importance of putting down roots, and of sharing his music. "Find a place and dig in," he wrote. "Songs can change the world."

"It was really special to receive that letter," says Ritter. "It was a reminder to me that, even with all the road there was in front of me, there was still a place somewhere that I would love above all others and that I would need to call home."

Seeger was quick to praise songs he liked, and he constantly forwarded recordings and lyrics to *Sing Out!* magazine for possible publication. In a 2002 note to upstate New York singer-songwriter Pat Lamanna, Seeger complimented several songs on a CD she'd given him.

"You should write more songs!" he wrote, adding in his typically self-effacing way, "Even the one about me was good, tho it didn't mention any of my faults (many)."

In 1988, Chicago banjoist Michael Miles received a life-changing letter about his first album, a collection of clawhammer banjo duets. "It is one of the most beautiful tapes I ever listened to in all my 70 years," Seeger wrote. "It is enough to make me want to start learning how to play the banjo all over again."

"Pete was such an encourager to so many," reflects Miles, who at the time was also program director at Chicago's Old Town School of Folk Music and often talked with Seeger about teaching. "I was one of the lucky ones, as I had 25 years of correspondence with him and could literally say that his encouragement truly shaped my work as a musician. And that was not to necessarily be like him, but rather to pursue my own muse."

The book *Pete Seeger in His Own Words*, edited by Rob Rosenthal and Sam Rosenthal, includes a notable example of Seeger's encouraging words in a letter written to a young Bob Dylan. Traveling overseas in 1963, Seeger came across the notorious *Newsweek* hit piece on Dylan that described how "his singing voice scratches and shouts so jarringly that his success, at first, seems incredible" and repeated the unsubstantiated rumor that Dylan did not write "Blowin' in the Wind."

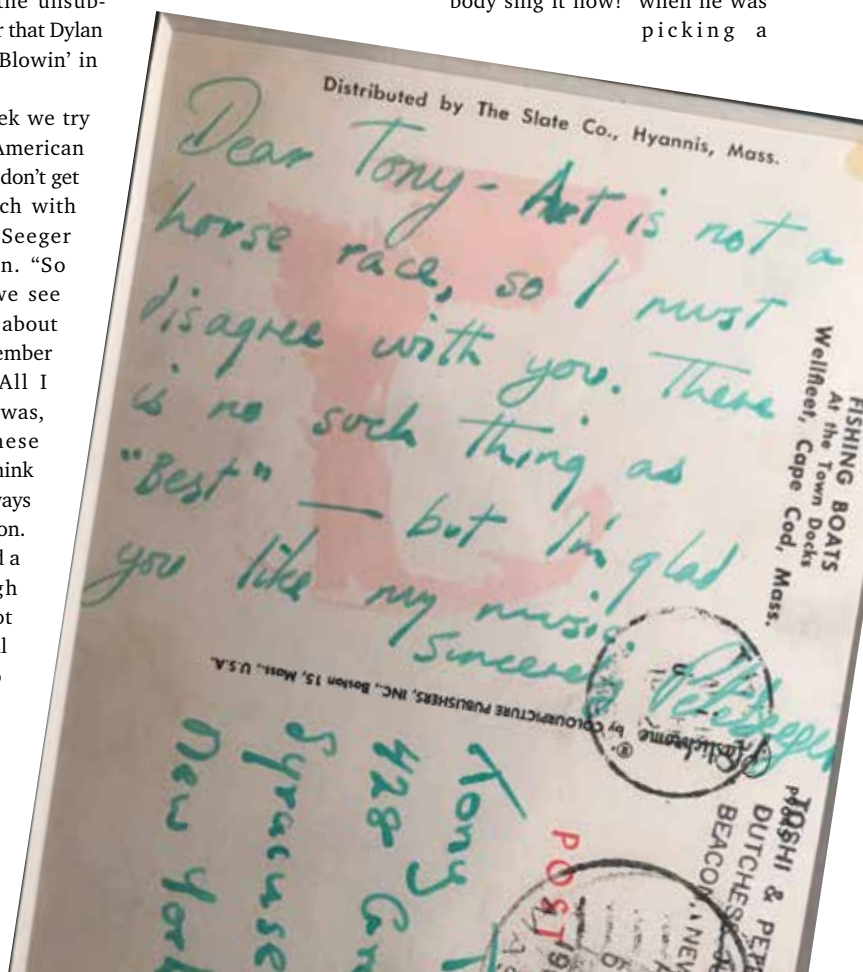
"Once a week we try to look at an American magazine so we don't get too out of touch with U.S. events," Seeger wrote to Dylan. "So what should we see but the article about you in the November 4 *Newsweek*. All I could think of was, 'Bastards.' These guys can sure think of more clever ways to crucify a person. I have hopes and a feeling though that you are not going to let it all bother you too much, but just keep on doing what you think best, and making up good songs."

EVERYBODY SING IT NOW!

Seeger's responses to songs weren't all blanket praise. He had strong, clear opinions about the kinds of language, vowel sounds, melodies, structure, and more that made songs memorable and—most importantly—singable.

He often asked songwriters for lyric sheets and returned them with mark-ups. Pat Lamanna shared with me a chart for her song "Peace Pilgrim" on which Seeger suggested a few adjustments to the melody and also commented on minute details of page formatting—such as using line breaks, indentation, and all caps for the chorus. Similarly, Adirondack folk musician Dan Berggren shared a lyric sheet for his song "From Every Mountain Side," a rewrite of "My Country 'Tis of Thee," with Seeger's comments on which verses he thought were good and which one was "not your best" (Berggren did ultimately follow Seeger's advice and drop the offending verse). In addition, Seeger noted, "I urge you to print your words in short lines, so it'll be easier for folks to pick 'em up."

Getting other folks to pick up songs was, for Seeger, the ultimate goal. He was an unparalleled song leader, and he advised other musicians on how to get an audience to sing along by supplying clear instructions and calling out the lyrics line by line. (This habit was so engrained that Seeger even called out "Everybody sing it now!" when he was picking a



Seeger's postcard to 13-year-old Tony Trischka

OCT 04 2010

song in his own living room with an audience of only me.)

On the topic of song leading, John McCutcheon notes that Seeger took care to pitch songs just right for groups—lower than they often are played in churches and other settings. Spook Handy, a younger folk singer whom Seeger mentored in the last decade of his life, noticed that Seeger would slow down leading into the chorus, to allow the sound to swell. In one of his letters to Handy, Seeger talked about signaling to an audience. “I usually point at the crowd on the words they should repeat,” he wrote. “Maybe an open hand, palm up, is better.”

“One time I asked Pete, ‘What is the most important tool for getting people to sing?’ and he said, ‘Listen to the audience,’” recalls Handy, who this year released Vol. 2 of his tribute *Songs of Pete, Woody, and Me*. “When I learned to do that, that really changed everything. It changes the sound that comes out of your mouth, and it invites people to fill in the space and sing along.”

THE WORKING MUSICIAN

Along with his thoughts on songs and singing, Seeger sometimes gave advice on the practicalities of (in the words of Utah Phillips) making a living, not a killing, in music. Vermont multi-instrumentalist/singer Rik Palieri, whose duo the Rix (with Rick Nestler) just released an album of maritime songs from Seeger's repertoire titled *Steering Pete's Course*, shared a few examples with me. Palieri's correspondence with Seeger ranged over many topics, from the origins of songs and the history of the Almanac Singers to tips on house-building. In response to a query about his iconic long-neck banjo, Seeger sent Palieri a full-size pencil rubbing of his instrument with notes on its construction.

“Many times these cards were followed by a phone call, and that is where the real mentoring took place,” says Palieri. “Pete would talk for sometimes over an hour, telling stories, singing songs, till [his wife] Toshi would yell at him to get off the phone.”

In a 1988 letter, [see p. 42] Seeger wrote about ways to stay afloat in music through a day job, teaching, or busking. And he shared his decidedly down-to-earth perspective on the musician's trade. “I think that one of the bad things about modern technological society is that people feel that they haven't ‘made it’ unless they are well known outside their home village,” wrote Seeger. “Once upon a time, only a few kings and pirates were known outside their home village. Everybody else was quite happy if they could do a job, whatever it was, and be known by their neighbors as being a dependable worker.”

Pat - thanks for coming Friday
to the Sloop Club! Sing Out should
songs! Send ~~me~~ ^{this song} to editor Mark Ma

Until the last few years, when that good movie,
came out, my lefty reputation kept me out of the
now I've blown my cover. The mail comes in
phone rings every 5 minutes. I have to say “no”
good people who want me to listen to their
look at their DVD. Or who want me to come
award Or when they can come and inter

Now this form letter is sent to you. I apologize
you: Stay well Keep involved. Don't give up
revolution took thousands of years The ind.
took hundreds of years. The information
taking decades. If we use it, and use the b
who knows what miracles may take place
ready have.

My voice is 90% gone now. I'm mainly a-
sing with Kids in Beacon and on the water
ally downriver or upriver, taking the opp
people I disagree with—that's a skill we
Again - my apologies to you

P.S. My book “Where Have All The Flowers Gone,
is now corrected and added to. Came off the
Check your library. It's now co-published
and W.W. Norton, NYC. A disc in back gives

Pete & Toshi Seeger
Box 431, Beacon, NY
12508

print your

ss.

"The Power of Song"
the spotlight. But
by the bushel, the
to all sorts of
D, read their book,
and accept an
review me

organize But I urge
The agricultural
industrial revolution
evolution is only
grams God gave us,
Some of them al-

songleader. But I
front, and occasion-
portunity to talk with
should all learn.
Pete

a singalong memoir
e press in Nov. 2009.
Sing Out Magazine
melodies. 267 songs.

Later in his life, Seeger relied more on form letters like this one, sent to Pat Lamanna in 2010 with a personal note on top.

BEYOND THE CULT OF PERSONALITY

Seeger was, of course, very well known far beyond his home village of Beacon, New York, but he resisted fame and constantly tried to turn the spotlight away from himself—and onto the music or the audience. In the Smithsonian's Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections, I found a letter to Folkways founder Moe Asch in which Seeger complained about his name being underlined in an ad in *Sing Out!* and about posters proclaiming him as "America's Favorite Folksinger."

"If it were true, which it is of course not, it wouldn't be necessary to say it," Seeger wrote. "The puffier the publicity gets, the more embarrassing the collapse later on, no? Why not put the emphasis on the songs?"

Seeger sounded a similar note when I interviewed him at his home in 2006, in the wake of Bruce Springsteen's album *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions* and all the attention (and mail) it generated. "I wish he hadn't used my name in the title," Seeger said. "He could have given me credit inside, saying he got onto a lot of these songs after listening to my records."

Though Seeger always aimed to encourage and mentor other musicians, he bristled at any kind of adulation. Spook Handy learned this the hard way, when he had the opportunity to introduce Seeger at a festival. "I talked about him as a hero," Handy recalls. "He came onstage and looked like he was going to bite my head off. He didn't like that."

More than just being uncomfortable with personal attention, Seeger objected to the whole idea of putting any artist on a pedestal. Through his whole performing life, he invited onstage countless musicians, famous as well as unknown, and insisted on treating everyone equally.

"He was someone who, by his mere example, broke down the whole cult of personality, and there was no bigger personality in folk music than Pete," says McCutcheon. "He rejected the whole notion of hierarchy and someone being worth more, whether it be in notoriety or in money."

BEYOND PERFORMANCE

Even more than breaking down the hierarchy among professional musicians, Seeger wanted to foster music-making by those who never venture onto a stage. This desire prompted the first postcard I received from him; in 1996, I wrote a "Letter from Home" for *Acoustic Guitar* about how my daughter, Lila, then two years old, had stirred all this informal family music-making, and had helped me appreciate what we lose by relegating music to professionals and recordings. Seeger's one-sentence postcard, still a treasured keepsake, simply said it was "the best article all year!" Three years later he wrote again to ask

permission to quote from from the article, and added, "I hope Lila still likes to make music, now that she is five, perhaps going on six."

A letter Seeger wrote to producer Joe Boyd in 1986, included in *Pete Seeger in His Own Words*, explained his objections to the professionalization of music—and it also set the record straight about his famous threat to axe the cables when Dylan went electric. "I did not object to the loud volume of sound when Bob was singing at Newport in 1965," Seeger wrote. "I was outraged at not being able to understand his words."

The problem with amplification and even instruments themselves, he added, is that "they tend to discourage the ordinary average person who just likes to sing a song into thinking that they can't sing without it. And in the long run what the human race needs in the way of music is the ability and the confidence to sing a song, whether it is at the fireside, bedside, tableside, worksite, sidewalk side, or anywhere side without having to think of it as a 'performance.' . . . Skiing and swimming are participation sports for millions, but music still seems to be in hock to the experts, and most of the millions listen."

THE LAST CHORUS

In 2014, Tony Trischka paid a visit to a Seeger at home along with musician/producer John Dull. Then 94 and walking unsteadily with two canes, Seeger asked for his banjo (the reach on his long-neck hurt his shoulder, so he used a shorter scale instrument) and sang his song "Quite Early Morning," which beautifully expresses his desire to pass music to the next generation.

*And so keep on while we live
Until we have no, no more to give
And when these fingers can strum no longer
Hand the old banjo to young ones stronger*

The next day, Seeger went into the hospital for the last time. Seeger's grandson Kitama Cahill-Jackson told Trischka later that this may have been the last song that Seeger sang. It's hard to imagine a more appropriate closer to his life in song than "Quite Early Morning" (see *Acoustic Classic* on page 64), with its theme of, in Trischka's words, "Keep on singing, keep on keeping on, things are going to be OK."

That is a message Seeger imparted to everyone—whether they considered themselves musicians or not.

"He mentored the world really," says McCutcheon. "I always thought when I was a kid that a concert was one guy showing off for a whole bunch of other people that were paying him to show off for them. With Pete, you were entering into a choir, and you went out of there feeling, wow, look what we did." **AC**



BILL EVANS

Bringing It Back Home

Exploring blues turnarounds

BY FRED SOKOLOW

THE PROBLEM

You've heard of turnarounds but aren't sure exactly what they are or how to use them.

THE SOLUTION

Learn a stock turnaround in E major, then work on variations in the same key as well as others.

What is a turnaround, you ask, and how do you play them? Well, in a nutshell a turnaround is a chord progression or lick that leads a song back to where it began, on its home chord. In the 12-bar blues form, the turnaround usually happens in the last two bars, and it helps return you to the I chord at the beginning of the form. Here I'll show you a bunch of different blues-based turnarounds in different keys—

great moves to have at your fingertips whenever you're playing blues-based tunes.

1 LEARN A COMMON TURNAROUND IN E

In order to understand a basic turnaround, let's check one out in context. **Example 1** depicts the last four measures of a 12-bar blues in E. The turnaround occurs in measures 3 and 4 (or bars 11 and 12 of the blues form). That's one of the most common blues turnarounds, and it's really pretty simple: After you play the E chord, just take an open D7 shape, move it up two frets to form an E7 chord, and then just walk it down in half steps (the distance of one fret) until you come back to the E chord in the last measure. Play

through this example until it's under your fingers—and in your ears—before moving on.

2 WORK UP A HANDFUL OF VARIATIONS

There are a million variations of that turnaround in E. You could play the chords broken, as shown in **Example 2**, or, instead of three-note chords on strings 1–3, you could do just dyads (two-note chords) on strings 2 and 3 (**Example 3**). **Example 4** is a cool variation on the dyad idea, while **Example 5** is another pattern with descending half-step movement, this time on strings 3 and 5, pitted against the ringing open strings 1 and 2. For some fun rockabilly variations, try **Example 6**, in the style of Carl Perkins, and **Example 7**, which nods to Buddy Holly.



Example 1

B₇ A₇ E E₇ B_bdim₇ A_{dim}₇ E

Example 2

E₇ B₇

Example 3

E₇ B₇

Example 4

E₇ B₇

Example 5

E₇ C[#]dim₇ A_m E B₇

Example 6

E₇ B₇

Example 7

E₇ B₇

Example 8

A₇ D₇ A₇ E₇

Example 9

A₇ E₇

Cont. on p. 48

You might have noticed that these examples all end on the V chord (B7). This nicely sets up the I chord (E/E7) at the start of the form (not shown in notation). That's exactly why they call them turnarounds!

3 DISCOVER TURNAROUNDS IN OTHER KEYS

Now let's try a turnaround in the key of A major. The simplest thing would be just to play the chords—I (A7), IV (D7), and V (E7), as shown in **Example 8**. But for something a little more challenging, try a really cool turnaround that Mance Lipscomb did (**Example 9**). Use your third finger to slide between the third and fifth frets on string 2.

For a turnaround in the key of D, you can

connect the I (D) and V (A7) chords by walking up in half steps, starting on the note F#—see **Example 10**. In the key of G, **Example 11** shows a classic turnaround that Robert Johnson used on “Love in Vain” and a bunch of other tunes. Hold the G note on string 1 with your fourth finger, while playing a neat descending line to bridge the I (G7) and V (D7) chords. **Example 12** shows another turnaround in G, with a bass line similar to that in Ex. 10.

And now here's a classic turnaround in the key of C (**Example 13**) that uses a descending melodic line—C-B \flat -A-A \flat -G—to create a chord progression of C (I)—C7 (I7)—F (IV)—Fm (iv)—C (I). By the way, you can play this and all of the other examples slow, fast, or anywhere in between.

Astute readers might have noticed that some of these turnarounds are moveable—you can take their shapes and shift them up or down the fretboard to play them in any key. **Example 14** shows how you can play Ex. 1 up a fret for the key of F major. **Example 15** shows how to move it up six frets for the key of B \flat . Once you've learned these turnarounds, I would encourage you to try coming up with some of your own.

Fred Sokolow, a Los Angeles-area multi-instrumentalist, is the author of hundreds of instructional books and videos for guitar, banjo, mandolin, lap steel, and ukulele. You can see them and contact Sokolow at sokolowmusic.com.

Cont. from p. 47

Example 10

Example 10 shows a turnaround in the key of D. The chords are D (I) and A7 (V). The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a bass line with fret numbers: 2, 2, 3, 3, 4, 4. The guitar part shows a descending line from the 2nd fret on string 1 to the 4th fret on string 2, ending on the A7 chord.

Example 11

Example 11 shows a classic turnaround in the key of G. The chords are G7 (I), C (IV), Cm (iv), G (I), and D7 (V). The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a bass line with fret numbers: 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 2, 1, 0, 0, 0. The guitar part shows a descending line from the 3rd fret on string 1 to the 0th fret on string 2, ending on the D7 chord.

Example 12

Example 12 shows another turnaround in the key of G. The chords are G (I) and D7 (V). The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a bass line with fret numbers: 3, 2, 2, 3, 3, 4, 4. The guitar part shows a descending line from the 3rd fret on string 1 to the 4th fret on string 2, ending on the D7 chord.

Example 13

Example 13 shows a classic turnaround in the key of C. The chords are C (I), C7 (I7), F (IV), Fm (iv), C (I), and G7 (V). The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of no sharps or flats, and a bass line with fret numbers: 1, 1, 1, 3, 2, 2, 1, 1, 0, 0, 0, 3, 2, 3. The guitar part shows a descending line from the 1st fret on string 1 to the 3rd fret on string 2, ending on the G7 chord.

Example 14

Example 14 shows a moveable turnaround in the key of F. The chords are F (I), F7 (I7), Bdim7 (IV), B \flat dim7 (iv), F (I), and C7 (V). The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B \flat), and a bass line with fret numbers: 1, 4, 5, 5, 4, 4, 3, 3, 1, 1, 1, 2, 3, 3. The guitar part shows a descending line from the 1st fret on string 1 to the 4th fret on string 2, ending on the C7 chord.

Example 15

Example 15 shows a moveable turnaround in the key of B \flat . The chords are B \flat (I), B \flat 7 (I7), F \flat dim7 (IV), E \flat dim7 (iv), B \flat (I), and F7 (V). The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of two flats (B \flat and E \flat), and a bass line with fret numbers: 6, 10, 9, 8, 9, 10, 8, 7, 6, 6, 6, 7, 8, 8. The guitar part shows a descending line from the 6th fret on string 1 to the 10th fret on string 2, ending on the F7 chord.

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Oscar Alemán

You Made Me Love You

The animated lines of an undersung swing master

BY GREG RUBY

The legacy of Django Reinhardt is well celebrated, but that's not quite the case with a guitarist who was also deeply entrenched in the 1930s Paris jazz scene. On either his National tricone or his Selmer *grande bouche*, Oscar Alemán had an impeccable sense of swing and played with exciting rhythmic punctuations, a horn-like attack, and sharp attention to detail. And unlike Reinhardt, he was an all-round entertainer—singing, dancing, and giving great liveliness to each song he interpreted.

Reinhardt and Alemán might have been competing for the spotlight, but they also maintained a deep mutual respect. "I knew Django Reinhardt well," Alemán recalled in *Jazz Journal International*. "He was my greatest friend in France. We played together many times, just for ourselves. I appreciated him, and I believe the feeling was mutual."

Alemán emerged from the most unlikely circumstances. Orphaned at age 11 in Argentina, he taught himself to play the *cavaquinho* (a small Portuguese instrument with four strings) to survive. By his late teens he was traveling the world performing Hawaiian tunes with a musical revue that included the New Orleans trumpeter Tommy Ladnier. Between listening to the records of guitarist Eddie Lang and violinist Joe Venuti and sharing the auspicious company of Ladnier, Alemán learned the "the meaning of improvisation, of playing according to the feeling one has at the moment," as he remembered in Michael Dregni's *Django: The Life and Music of a Gypsy Legend*.

Alemán's renown reached the American expatriate singer Josephine Baker, who brought him to Paris, where he was soon leading her backing band, the Baker Boys, touring across Europe in the 1930s. Great bandleaders like Duke Ellington got hip to Alemán and tried to recruit the guitarist for their own ensembles, but Baker refused, clearly valuing Alemán's multifaceted talents.

World War II forced Alemán to flee France. On the border, he was assaulted by Nazi soldiers who stole all his money and his National guitar. Upon returning to Argentina virtually unknown,



FROM PHOTO COLLECTION OF JOSE IACONA

and with only his Selmer, he slowly rebuilt his career. Alemán died in 1980 at the age of 71, leaving behind a treasure trove of recordings worthy of study by any aspiring swing player—or any serious guitarist in general.

I first heard Alemán's music on the album *Swing Guitar Masterpieces* (Acoustic Disc), shortly after its 1998 release. The guitarist's uplifting sense of swing and his subtly complex phrasing were immediately irresistible—plus the music just made me want to dance. I have since spent countless hours performing and transcribing Alemán's music to better internalize his unique approach to swing guitar.

In 2019, I released *Oscar Alemán Play-Along Songbook Vol. 1*, hoping to inspire musicians around the world to spend time with Alemán's music and add it to their repertoires. The following transcription is excerpted from that book.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MELODY

Alemán recorded the swing-era hit "Estoy Enamorado (You Made Me Love You)" for the Odeon record label on June 27, 1944, in Buenos Aires with his Quinteto de Swing. "You Made Me Love You" is a masterpiece—complete with Alemán's spirited singing, punctuated by vocal shouts from the band; a brilliant interpretation of the melody; and fiery solos from both Alemán and the violinist Manuel Gavinovich.

While Alemán used a thumbpick and fingers, many of his pieces, including "You Made Me Love You," translate very well to plectrum-style guitar. The song's form is the standard 32-measure A-B-A1-C. On the four-bar intro, the chord diagrams mirror the standard notation and tab. For the melody and solo, I've provided suggested voicings for the rhythm guitar. Like Reinhardt with his Quintette du Hot Club of France, Alemán always

had a rhythm guitarist in his band, responsible for maintaining steady, driving quarter notes with accents on beats 2 and 4. (For more on this approach, check out Whit Smith's Western swing lesson in the May/June 2019 issue of AG, as that style of accompaniment would work perfectly in this setting.)

Alemán remains close to the melody throughout the first half of the chorus (starting at bar 5), adding hammer-ons, pull-offs, slides, and vibrato to create interest and variety. Like many of the great players of the era, he often anticipates a chord change by an eighth note, as in the C# at the end of bar 12, which is the third of the A7 chord in the following measure.

When playing a melody, Alemán was clearly inclined to honor the composer's intent. In this particular selection, he waits until measure 20 for his first actual lick. Try the lick—which starts on the root of the chord on the “and” of beat 1 and does a neat descending pivot—in all 12 keys, as it's a good one to have at your command.

During the second chorus (beginning at bar 21), Alemán adds more to his melodic interpretation. In measure 22, he arpeggiates the C/E-to-E \flat dim7 move, but then quickly returns to the melody in the following measures. Not until bars 27–32 does he abandon the melody to add punchy, rhythmic phrasing that builds the intensity and concludes with a return to the tune in bars 33 and 34. Notice how in measure 29 Alemán oscillates between the root and the flatted ninth (B \flat) of the A7 chord, adding the open A string to build the phrase before chromatically descending into a D7 arpeggio in measure 31. It is pure Alemán!


FASCINATING RHYTHMS

Alemán opens his solo (bar 37) with a descending chromatic line that leads right into an ascending arpeggio through the C/E–E \flat dim7 move, ending neatly on the G7's fifth, D. In measures 39–41, he uses an F triad shape (fingers 3, 2, and 1 on strings 4, 3, and 2, respectively) to negotiate a G7 chord. Make sure you hammer on all three notes of the F shape on beat 4 of measure 40.

Another approach Alemán would often employ is to take one or two notes and develop them rhythmically, as seen in measures 43 and 44. Practice this passage slowly to make sure you are nailing the rhythms, and use this concept in your own solos: find an interesting chord tone or two and create new rhythmic phrases. Focusing on rhythmic ideas rather than melodic development can lead you to interesting places and get you away from chasing the chord tones.

Measure 52 offers a great triplet lick. Use your third and first fingers for the pull-off, and after the open B, shift up to second position in order to most efficiently stop the octave As. In yet another cool move, in bars 60 and 61, Alemán bends an A up to A# while holding a B \flat on the adjacent string. This half-step tension builds across two measures through an E7–A7 progression. The notes don't change, but their harmonic function does. Look for ways to add this concept—notes that work together across a chord change—to your own playing.

Greg Ruby is a guitarist, composer, historian, and educator specializing in jazz from the first half of the 20th century. His books include Oscar Alemán Play-Along Book Vol. 1, Frank D. Waldron: Seattle's Syncopated Classic, and Pearl Django Play-Along. gregrubymusic.com.



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Intro

Moderately fast swing ♩ = 210

Chord diagrams and fret numbers for the Intro:

- C**: x3421x, 8 fr.
- F#dim7**: x2314x, 8 fr.
- Ebm7**: xx3333, 11 fr.
- Dm7**: xx3333, 10 fr.
- Ebm**: xxx333, 11 fr.
- Dm**: xxx333, 10 fr.
- C**: xxx211, 8 fr.
- C6**: xx213x, 9 fr.
- Ebm**: xxx333, 11 fr.
- Dm**: xxx333, 10 fr.

The Intro consists of a single staff with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The bass line is indicated by fret numbers on a six-string staff.

Solos/Head

Chord diagrams and fret numbers for the Solos/Head section:

- C6**: 2x14xx, 7 fr.
- C/E**: 2x13xx, 10 fr.
- Ebm7**: 2x13xx, 10 fr.
- G7**: 2x13xx, 9 fr.

The Solos/Head section begins at measure 5. It features a treble staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The bass line is indicated by fret numbers on a six-string staff.

Chord diagrams and fret numbers for the Solos/Head section:

- C6**: 2x14xx, 7 fr.

The Solos/Head section continues from measure 9. It features a treble staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The bass line is indicated by fret numbers on a six-string staff.

Chord diagrams and fret numbers for the Solos/Head section:

- A7**: 2x34xx, 5 fr.
- D7**: 2x13xx

The Solos/Head section continues from measure 13. It features a treble staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The bass line is indicated by fret numbers on a six-string staff.

Chord diagrams and fret numbers for the Solos/Head section:

- G7**: 2x13xx, 9 fr.
- C6**: 2x14xx, 7 fr.
- C/E**: 2x13xx, 10 fr.
- Ebm7**: 2x13xx, 10 fr.

The Solos/Head section continues from measure 18. It features a treble staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The bass line is indicated by fret numbers on a six-string staff.

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G7
2x13xx 9 fr.

23

E7
2x13xx 6 fr.

A7
2x34xx 5 fr.

D7
2x13xx

27

C6
2x14xx 7 fr.

G7
2x13xx 9 fr.

To Coda ☺

C6
2x14xx 7 fr.

G7
2x13xx 9 fr.

play 3 times
(solos over changes)

32

Guitar Solo (Fourth Chorus)

C6
2x14xx 7 fr.

C/E
2x13xx 10 fr.

E^bdim7
2x13xx 10 fr.

G7
2x13xx 9 fr.

37

C6
2x14xx 7 fr.

A7
2x34xx 5 fr.

42

Cont. from p. 53

D7
2x13xx

G7
2x13xx 9 fr.

C6
2x14xx 7 fr.

C/E
2x13xx 10 fr.

E^bdim7
2x13xx 10 fr.

G7
2x13xx 9 fr.

E7
2x13xx 6 fr.

A7
2x34xx 5 fr.

D7
2x13xx

C6
2x14xx 7 fr.

G7
2x13xx 9 fr.

D.S. al Coda
(no repeats)

Coda

C6
2x14xx 7 fr.

G7
2x13xx 9 fr.

C6
2x14xx 7 fr.

C[#]9
xx133x

C9
xx133x

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READERS' PICK

Dire Straits (L-R): John Illsley, Mark Knopfler, Pick Withers, David Knopfler



HEINRICH KLAFES

Sultans of Swing

Translating an electric classic to acoustic guitar

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

When *AG* recently surveyed readers about what songs they'd like to learn, the most requested selection was "Sultans of Swing." This came as a surprise, as the track, which the British rock band Dire Straits released in 1978, has not a lick of acoustic guitar in it. But ask and you shall receive, as they say.

Presenting "Sultans" in the magazine was a bit of a challenge, as the tune has sections of varying lengths—the verses are anywhere from 16 to 20 bars—precluding repeats, and making it prohibitively long to transcribe each and every note that guitarist Mark Knopfler played on the original recording. By my calculation, it would have taken up around 20 percent of the magazine. That said, I've notated the song's meatiest parts—the intro, chorus riff, and first guitar solo, which translate nicely enough to the acoustic guitar.

There are two electric guitars on the studio version—one dedicated to lead and the other

rhythm—and the intro notated here captures a little of both. This section is drawn from the D natural minor scale (D E F G A B \flat C) and falls neatly under the fingers in fifth position. Starting in the fourth bar, stop the fifth-fret G with your third finger and then use that finger for all the other seventh-fret notes. Use your first, second, and fourth fingers, respectively, for notes at frets 5, 6, and 8.

In the chorus, Knopfler uses compact, three-note voicings on an inner string set, rather than more typical full voicings, to create a memorable riff. This part should be straightforward enough on the fretting fingers, but in case it's not obvious from the notation, at the end of the second bar, make sure your first finger is barred across strings 2–5 at fret 5. That will set you up for the double pull-off at the top of the following measure.

Knopfler uses a handful of smart strategies in his 28-bar solo—outlining the chords, as in the third through fifth measures and elsewhere;

deploying pentatonic lines, like seen in the 15th bar, and more. As with tackling any solo, it can be just as useful to go for the general spirit, rather than cop everything note-for-note. I've included all of Knopfler's string bends. Depending on your instrument and string choice, you might be able to pull these off on an acoustic guitar (in preparing the notation I had no problem doing so on a Gibson L-50 with D'Addario NB 12s). But if the bends prove problematic, there are workarounds. You might try sliding up the indicated amount instead. For instance, at the top of the solo, pick the eighth-fret G, then slide up a whole step, to the tenth-fret A.

If Knopfler's moves seem too challenging, you could just skip to page 59, where I've provided the lyrics and chord changes. Just strum using the five basic grips, noting the use of a fifth-position F chord, as opposed to the more typical first-fret barre grip. You can revisit the riffing and soloing bits whenever you're ready.

AC

Intro

Dm

Chorus Riff

Dm C Bb F C

1.

F C

2.

Guitar Solo

Dm

C

Bb

A

Dm

C

Bb

A

F

SULTANS OF SWING

Cont. from p. 57

C **B \flat**

D m **B \flat**

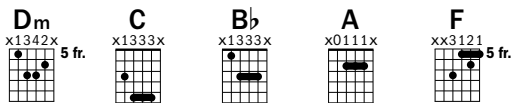
C **B \flat** **C**

D m **C** **B \flat** **F** **C**

D m **C** **B \flat** **F**



Chords



Intro

Dm

1. You get a shiver in the dark
It's raining in the park but meantime
South of the river you stop and you hold everything
A band is blowing Dixie double four time
You feel alright when you hear the music ring
2. Well now you step inside but you don't see too many faces
Coming in out of the rain they hear the jazz go down
Competition in other places
But the horns they blowin' that sound
Way on down south
Way on down south
3. You check out Guitar George; he knows all the chords
Mind he's strictly rhythm; he doesn't want to make it cry or sing
Yes and an old guitar is all he can afford
When he gets up under the lights to play his thing
4. And Harry doesn't mind if he doesn't make the scene
He's got a daytime job; he's doing alright
He can play the honky tonk like anything
Saving it up for Friday night
With the Sultans
With the Sultans of

Chorus

Dm C B^b C
Dm C B^b C

5. And a crowd of young boys they're fooling around in the corner
Drunk and dressed in their best brown baggies and their platform soles
They don't give a damn about any trumpet-playing band
It ain't what they call rock and roll

And the Sultans
Yeah the Sultans are playing

Chorus

Dm C B^b C
Creole Creole, baby
Dm C B^b C

Guitar Solo

6. And then the man he steps right up to the microphone
And says at last just as the time bell rings
"Goodnight, now it's time to go home"
Then he makes it fast with one more thing
We are the Sultans
We are the Sultans of

Chorus

Dm C B^b C
Swing
Dm C B^b C

Outro-Guitar Solo



Sean McGowan



O Come, All Ye Faithful

Expand your harmonic vocabulary with this vocal-inspired arrangement

BY SEAN MCGOWAN

“O Come, All Ye Faithful” is a widely known hymn, with lyrics commonly sung in both English and Latin (and sometimes referred to by its Latin name, “Adeste Fideles”). Its words and melody are commonly attributed to an 18th-century English hymnist named John Francis Wade.

This solo-guitar arrangement moves twice through the song’s simple verse/chorus form, set in the key of E major. The first verse features contrapuntal motion with inner lines moving under the melody. While the majority of the harmonies in both verses are diatonic chords in E major, there are also several non-diatonic passing chords that offer additional color and texture to the melody. This arrangement was created with a cappella vocal groups like Singers Unlimited and Take 6 in mind, because they are known for singing unembellished melodies with lots of colorful, chromatic harmonies below.

The chorus begins in measure 13, with the melody harmonized in sixths over a low open-E pedal for four measures. Starting on beat three of measure 16, the melody begins appearing as

the top notes in a series of harmonized block chord voicings, working up to measures 20 and 21, where a two-bar interlude sets up the second verse. Pluck each quarter-note block chord voicing evenly with the thumb and fingers of the picking hand, making sure to emphasize the top melody note of the voicing.

The second verse is similar in texture to the first, but with some different chord changes for variety. Most of these are four-note chord voicings that should be played with the picking-hand thumb plus index, middle, and ring fingers. Take your time through measures 28–29 and allow the music to breathe. The second verse concludes with some stacked-fourth voicings in the first two beats of bar 32, leading to an E6/9 chord and the second chorus.

The second chorus is to be played exactly like the first, but moves to a short coda after the Am6 chord in measure 18. This section begins with the normal E/B–B7 cadence but moves to a surprising D13 chord (♭VII7) before resolving to the E tonic to end the song. The last two measures feature harmonics on beats

three and four: two natural harmonics at the 12th fret over the sustaining D13 chord, and two artificial harmonics at the ninth fret over the E6/9 chord.

The last two measures feature harp harmonics on beats 3 and 4. For the first pair of harmonics, keep the D13/A shape held with your fretting fingers. At the same time, lightly touch each string directly above the fretwire at the 12th fret with your picking hand’s index finger, while picking the string with that hand’s thumb. For the E6/9 chord, once again holding the grip with your fretting hand, play the harmonics with your index finger over the ninth fret, resulting in tones an octave plus a fifth higher than the fretted notes (C♯ and F♯). For more on harp harmonics, see the Basics lesson in the February 2017 issue of AG and Woodshed in the August 2018 issue.

This arrangement is excerpted from Sean McGowan’s Holiday Songs for Fingerstyle Guitar, now available in an updated print edition at store.acousticguitar.com.

Verse 1
Freely

Chord progression for Verse 1 (Measures 1-12):

Measures 1-4: E, B7sus4, B, E, F#m, E, F#m, E/B, B7, F#m7b5

Measures 5-8: C#m7, B/A, A/G#, B/F#, E6, B/D#, C#m7, B7, Bsus4, B, B7/A

Measures 9-12: E/G#, A6, F#m7, Eadd9, D#m11, G#m7, C#m7, F#7, B7, B

The guitar tablature below the staff shows the fret numbers for each measure, corresponding to the chords indicated above.

Chorus

Chord progression for Chorus (Measures 13-16):

Measures 13-16: E, F#m, E, B7b9, G#dim7, F#m7, E/G#, A6, A#dim7

The guitar tablature below the staff shows the fret numbers for each measure, corresponding to the chords indicated above.

O COME, ALL YE FAITHFUL

Cont. from p. 61

To Coda

18 **B7 B7/A E/G# Am6 E/B B A#m7,5 Asus2 F#m11 B7sus4 B**

Verse 2

22 **E F#m7/E E C#m7 B7sus4 E/G# A B13sus4 Cdim7 Cadd9**

26 **C#m7 B/A F#m7 B/E C#m7 B A#m7 Emaj7/G# A9 G9 F#m11**

30 **Emaj13 F#m7/E E F#9 G#9 C#m7 F#/A# Emaj7/G# F#/A# E9**

D.S. al Coda

Coda

34 **E/B B7 D13/A E9**

35 **E/B B7 D13/A E9**



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Quite Early Morning

Pete Seeger's classic song arranged for open-G guitar

BY JEFFREY PEPPER RODGERS

Pete Seeger wrote this lovely song in the 1960s, and as recounted in "Letters from Pete" (page 40), it may have been the last song he sang. He told banjoist Tony Trischka this was his favorite of his own songs. Like so many Seeger tunes, it's a catchy three-chorder, and the lyrics present in just a few simple words his socially concerned yet ultimately optimistic point of view.

Seeger released this song on several albums in varying keys, including *Together in Concert* with Arlo Guthrie (in G \flat), *Tomorrow's Children* (with a kids' chorus, in D \flat), and the new box set *The Smithsonian Folkways Collection* (with Fred Hellerman on what sounds like a 12-string guitar in dropped D, in the key of D). The Mammals, Holly Near, and others have recorded their own versions. In Seeger's *Where Have All the Flowers Gone* songbook, he provided tab for the song in G on a five-string banjo in G tuning (G D G B D), with a sweet three-finger-style

banjo part that translates easily to guitar. That was the inspiration for this arrangement.

You can approach "Quite Early Morning" in several ways. The easiest would just be to sing and accompany it with standard G, C, and D7 chords. Alternatively, tune to open G (D G D G B D) and play a simple alternating bass/strum behind your voice, as Seeger himself sometimes did, using the picking patterns shown on page 66 for the three chords. (I'm including two ways to play the C: in open position with G in the bass and as a barre at the fifth fret.) Or you can try the open-G fingerstyle part, which includes the whole melody and can stand on its own. On the *Tomorrow's Children* album and in several YouTube performance videos, you can hear Seeger play the three-finger part not just as an instrumental intro and break but under the singing. Doubling the vocal melody with your guitar is a nice effect.

In the fingerstyle instrumental, note that the melody is not on top but on the middle strings—primarily the third and fourth strings, with just a few notes on the second string in measure 9. You can help the melody stand out by picking these notes with your thumb. Sliding up to the fourth fret on the third string (rather than playing the open second string), as in measure 2 and throughout the piece, helps articulate the melody too.

This arrangement stays close to how Seeger picked "Quite Early Morning" on banjo but makes some adjustments for the difference in instruments (since a guitar doesn't have a high fifth string, for instance). Try playing the instrumental as an intro, sing a few verses, and return to the instrumental as a break before or after the final verse. Then, as Seeger would want you to, put away the tab, make it your own, and pass it along.

AC

QUITE EARLY MORNING

WORDS AND MUSIC BY PETE SEEGER

Tuning: D G D G B D

♩ D7 G

1. 2. C

8 G D7 1.

12 G 2. To Coda ⊕ G

D.S. al Coda (take repeats)

⊕ Coda
G

16

17

QUITE EARLY MORNING

Cont. from p. 65

Picking Patterns

1., 5. You know it's dark - est _____ be - fore _____ the dawn. And this thought keeps
 man - kind _____ won't long _____ en - dure. But what makes them
 3., 4. See additional lyrics

— me _____ mov - ing on. _____ If we _____ could heed _____
 — feel _____ so _____ dog - gone sure? _____ I know that you _____

— these _____ ear - ly warn - ings, _____ the time _____ is
 — who _____ hear my sing - ing _____ could make _____ those

now, quite _____ ear - ly morn - ing. If we could
 free - dom _____ bells go ring - ing. I know that

heed these _____ ear - ly warn - ings, _____ the time _____ is
 you who _____ hear my sing - ing _____ could make _____ those

now, quite ear - ly morn - ing. 2. Some say that
 free - dom bells go ring - ing. 3. And so we

3. And so we keep on while we live
 Until we have no, no more to give
 And when these fingers can strum no longer
 Hand the old guitar to young ones stronger
 And when these fingers can strum no longer
 Hand the old guitar to young ones stronger

4. So though it's darkest before the dawn
 This thought keeps us moving on
 Through all this world of joy and sorrow
 We still can have singing tomorrows
 Through all this world of joy and sorrow
 We still can have singing tomorrows

A man with a joyful expression is seated, playing a light-colored acoustic guitar and singing into a microphone. He is wearing a grey fedora, glasses, a pink short-sleeved button-down shirt, a black vest, and black shorts. A music stand with sheet music is positioned in front of him. The background is dark and out of focus.

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MAKERS & SHAKERS

More Than Just the OM Guy

Through his love of the Orchestra Model, Eric Schoenberg has enjoyed an influential career as a guitarist, dealer, and maker

BY GREG OLWELL

I've always been 'the OM guy,'" says Eric Schoenberg, from his shop in the tiny enclave of Tiburon, California, just north of San Francisco. Rather than claiming this title as his own, the soft-spoken guitar dealer, performer, and author uses it as an acknowledgment of how many see him after he spent decades advocating for the revival of Martin's first truly modern instrument, the 14-fret OM. This guitar style is now so common that it's difficult to imagine that it had nearly faded into obscurity. And the classic shape, with its shallow body, long and slim neck, and relatively wide nut (1.75 inches), might have remained a niche offering but for the efforts of Schoenberg, who had discovered the appeal of these guitars during his influential career as a fingerstyle guitarist.

As Schoenberg grew cautious about performing on his valuable vintage instruments and also

developed an interest in cutaways, he started working with guitar makers to reintroduce the OM model, both with and without the cutaway. A partnership with luthier Dana Bourgeois and C.F. Martin & Co. led the legacy builder to make its first custom-brand guitar in decades under the Schoenberg name. Schoenberg would go on to work with a line of talented luthiers—including Bourgeois, TJ Thompson, Julian Borges, Bruce Sexauer, and others—to continue his personal brand of guitars.

I spent an afternoon talking with Schoenberg in the cozy confines of his shop. As customers and business partner James Hipps moved about the space, Schoenberg spoke about his career playing and building guitars, the current guitar market, and his enduring passion for the instrument. Regardless of the topic, the talk always returned to tone, which Schoenberg often

demonstrated by picking up a guitar and making a point with sound, not words.

At 73, Schoenberg is resisting the urge to retire. "The reason I don't want to retire is that it keeps getting better—not in the money sense—in the fun sense. I just learn new things every day."

How did you get into vintage guitars?

I started as a player back in the '60s. I was one of those Baby Boomers into guitar, and there were so many of us it was a blast. I started off more as an old-timey and folky guitarist into the Kingston Trio, the Weavers, and the New Lost City Ramblers—the first album I bought was their first record. Every one of their records had a fingerpicking thing by Mike Seeger or Tom Paley, and we'd all learn it by listening to the records. We even copied the mistakes [laughs].



The current instruments at the time just didn't do it and the old instruments back then weren't that old! My first opportunity for a good guitar, I was offered a 1930s D-18 for \$75 or a D-21 from '56 for \$125. I said, "Oh, rosewood is better, right? I'll do the D-21." That '30s D-18 would be a really killer guitar right now, I'm sure. In those days, it was too easy to find the old ones. They weren't that expensive.

But for me it's always been a search for instruments that can do what you need as a player, not as a collector. I've been bitten by the need to get something as a collector a few times and it didn't tend to work out so well.

Were you always a fingerstyle specialist?

I was a folkie from the word go, then I got into country, then I did my Beatles book [*Fingerpicking Beatles*, Hal Leonard]. The fingerpicking thing, with the alternating bass, is the definition of ragtime: four quarter notes to the measure in the bass and a syncopated melody. A major influence was one of Merle Travis' big records, *Walkin' the Strings*.

I took lessons from David Bennett Cohen, who's now known as the guitar and piano guy from Country Joe and the Fish. We'd meet up at 48th Street [New York City's famed Music Row] on weekends and we'd go to some studios that were up on the third floor, above Noah Wolfe's shop. David was a great teacher. We all played by ear; there were no transcriptions to work from back then. It was the folk process at work.

I was extremely shy when I was young, and I didn't get the experience of playing with other people. I missed that a lot, but I did have a few examples of playing with other people, such as that first record with my cousin [*The New Ragtime Guitar* with David Laibman, 1971]. I learned more about playing guitar from him during that time than from anyone else.

Like what?

[*Grabbing a guitar, Schoenberg begins to demonstrate by fingerpicking a rag.*] You want to fill in the chord by putting the seventh in the bass, instead of the root. That was a big discovery for me in those days. And part of it was the triad and having a third underneath the root for an ending. It resolves each time in a very distinctive way.

What inspired you to build your line of guitars?

It started off with needing to find the older guitars with the wider necks for fingerpicking—the OMs. The wider neck was almost lost when I started—almost nobody was making them, except in a few very small cases, and guitars were still being made with narrow necks like they were during the swing era in the '40s. I had

these old guitars for fingerpicking and they were getting to be very valuable . . . and I developed a desire for a cutaway.

Dana Bourgeois was doing repairs on my old guitars. I got to know him after he hired me to open for Doc Watson up in Maine. He tried to get me to play his guitars, but I had my old OMs. So he enticed with me some beautiful wood and the idea of designing the guitar to my specs, including the cutaway. We came to an agreement on the cutaway and getting the right dimensions for the string spacing at the bridge, 12th fret, and nut.

The spacing was based on old Martins from before the turn of the century, before the swing

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ERIC SCHOENBERG



Schoenberg's shop is jam packed with both new and vintage instruments.

era and cowboy chords, when people played fingerstyle. These guitars had a wide spacing, with 2-3/8 inches at the bridge and 1-3/4 at the nut. The spacing at the 12th fret is also just as important, because with these wide necks, people were setting the strings too far in from the neck's edge and that makes playing uncomfortable. These were things that the guys at Martin knew back in the late '20s and early '30s, but the knowledge about how far in from the edge of the neck to put the strings had gotten lost.

How did you start collaborating with different makers to build Schoenberg guitars?

Dana Bourgeois was my partner, and we went to Martin first. As we were basing my guitars on Martins, it made sense to go to them. At that point, again having lost track of the old things they did, they were making heavy guitars. The guitar must be made much lighter if you're going to play fingerstyle, with the top thickness being the most important thing and then the top bracing.

Because we were building lighter guitars, Martin didn't want to do the warranty work, as it was lower than their specs. It took a lot of convincing, but we still have guitars from the 1890s with light builds that work well.

After Dana left, I partnered with TJ Thompson, who had gotten an education as an apprentice with Dana. He had been fixing all my old guitars and really got to know the old stuff. I was at my guitar shop in West Concord, Massachusetts, and we'd FedEx completed braced tops to Martin to arrive on the day the tops needed to be put on. I was also working at

the Music Emporium, which I started around 1975 with my partners. And we had a small shop in Littleton, Massachusetts—four people making guitars—but once I moved out here it didn't work, so we closed the shop down.

How did you end up in California?

My wife was offered a job running a library, and it was a chance to move away from the Massachusetts winters. It was a tough decision because I didn't know what I would do; I didn't

really have a job or a career out here. I wasn't too into the idea of getting back into performing, and it's nice to have the shop so I can talk about guitars.

I opened this place around 1997 and it took a lot of time to get it going. Still, it was amazing how things came into place, like a friend who had an architect friend who designed the interior and he knew a guy who could build it. It was Bruce Sexauer, who wasn't a full-time guitar builder at the time. Then the realtor told me about a guitar collector who had just passed away, leaving behind 25 guitars that needed to be sold, so we had instant stock.

How has the market changed in the last few years?

There have been trends and fads, and for a while it was for expensive, handmade guitars. People would buy them, keep them for a while, sell them, and buy another. For whatever reason, that's changed, and now vintage guitars have become more prominent.

People have valued aspects of the old guitars for the wrong reasons. Like, they have learned that [Gibson] Loar L-5s are not necessarily better than guitars that came later but didn't have that label. The public learns very slowly, but when it does learn it affects the market.

Certainly, smaller guitars have gotten to be much more popular. It used to be that people had to have dreadnoughts, but people are now much more aware that you can't always play those things comfortably and they are gradually learning that a small guitar can sound just as good or better.

Why do people come to you for guitars?

I think people come to us because of the sound and feel of the guitars we sell—it's how well the instrument works for the players. We're selective about what we sell, because we can't sell it if we don't like it, and we're not going to lie. The one area we're not so great in is selling collector guitars. A lot of dealers are focused on guitars that are all-original. I appreciate that perspective, but I feel that it's way overblown.

I taught for many years, and that experience of dealing with people can be like helping them buy a guitar. People can come in or call and get full understanding of what is involved in the sound and condition of each instrument.

People ask how the business is and I say it's great in every single way possible, except for one. It's because the market is a little bit crazy.

How?

I think the current political situation has hurt the market. People are not relaxed, and they do not want to spend money on great guitars. More

Schoenberg puts a fresh set of strings on a recent arrival



'It started off with needing to find the older guitars with the wider necks for fingerpicking—the OMs.'

ERIC SCHOENBERG

often they want to sell the guitars they bought to collect now that they have decided which guitars they want to keep. So, we get some great stuff.

What advice do you have for people who are shopping for a guitar?

Size is a big problem for many people. Buying a guitar is a bit like buying a bicycle: The fit can almost be more important than anything else, and it's why bike shops spend a lot of time trying to fit you properly. I like the idea that we can give people guitars to play so they can feel a guitar's neck shape or body size to find out what's comfortable for them.

It's important to hear someone play or to talk to them about what they play. Just yesterday, someone was in here and said, "I just don't like mahogany guitars." I grabbed one off the wall, put it in his hands, and now he likes mahogany guitars. There are so many factors that go into the way a guitar sounds, so it's much more complicated than judging a guitar by its woods. It's a complex combination of things and if someone is limiting their view, I will challenge them directly.

Like how some players seem to buy guitars with certain kind of woods?

Some people will say they want Brazilian

rosewood and Adirondack spruce, and that's not always a great combination right off the bat. Brazilian is powerful and bright and so is Adirondack, but European spruce is kind of a yin-yang with Brazilian—because it often has a warmth and sweetness.

But it all can vary because wood is so different. I used to believe that I needed tight-grained spruce tops, but one day when I got to go through a pile of rejected tops at Martin, I found a nice tight-grained top and it was really stiff. Then I found one that looked just as good but it was like a piece of lasagna. After that, I picked up a wide-grained top and it was stiff. People see stuff and they make up conclusions without the experience to back it up. You have to be able to change your mind based on the evidence. My conclusion from that experience was that I couldn't judge a top by how it looks. Period.

AG



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Talking Slots

How common nut problems are diagnosed and eliminated

BY MARTIN KEITH

Q: *I play a Martin D-28SW. I have been using medium-gauge Martin Monel Tony Rice strings for several years and like them a lot. Some of the strings, particularly the wound third, get a little stuck when I am tuning. If the string is a little sharp and I tune it down, the pitch drops too far. When I tune back up, the string goes too sharp, with a little clicking sound. How can this slight but annoying tuning problem be fixed?*

—Bill Pramuk, Napa, CA

A: What you're experiencing is a very common problem—and, happily, one that's easily remedied.

It relates to the size and shape of the slots in the nut, which is a critical area where a few thousandths of an inch can make a big difference in your comfort, intonation, and tuning stability.

The click you hear is the sound of string tension being released from one side of the nut to the other. This is quite possibly due to the larger gauge of the Monel strings you mentioned, which at .013–.056 are heavier than the .012–.052 set Martin likely installed on the guitar during assembly. Thicker strings will require the nut slots to be widened, ensuring that they can pass freely through the slots without any binding or pinching. Because of the break angle (the angle change between the fretboard and the headpiece) there will always be some downward pressure from the string, so it's important that the slot be shaped and finished correctly, as well as sized appropriately.

When correctly cut, a nut slot should have a U-shaped profile—straight walls and a half-rounded bottom. A common problem is slots with a V shape—in these cases, downward



A correctly cut nut slot has a U-shaped profile.

pressure causes the string to wedge itself into the narrowing bottom of the V, and inevitably the string will pinch and bind as a result. The slot bottom should be smooth and free of “chatter marks,” the rough texture caused by incorrect or incomplete filing. I usually size nut slots anywhere from .003–.006 inches larger than the stated string diameter. This avoids any potential friction, even in cases where the player goes up a gauge.

Nut-slot depth is the other parameter that has a big impact. If the slots are filed too deeply, the open strings will buzz and the nut will

require replacement or repair. However, the much more common scenario is that the slots are shallow—in this case, the strings will be too far above the frets. As a result, simply pressing the strings to the frets will bend them sharp. This effect will be most noticeable in the first few positions—and since that is where one usually includes open strings alongside fretted ones, it is usually very noticeable. During setup, most luthiers use feeler gauges or other measuring tools to dial in a nut depth that allows minimal clearance above the frets without buzzing. Different players and playing styles sometimes



Martin Keith

GOT A QUESTION?

Uncertain about guitar care and maintenance? The ins-and-outs of guitar building? Or another topic related to your gear? Ask *Acoustic Guitar's* repair expert Martin Keith by sending an email titled “Repair Expert” to Editors.AG@stringletter.com and we'll forward it to Keith.



If AG selects your question for publication, you'll receive a complimentary copy of AG's *Acoustic Guitar Owner's Manual*.

require specific tweaks—if you're an open-position strummer, your ideal setup may well be different from that of a fleet-fingered soloist.

This would be a good moment to mention the wide range of nut materials that are available. Traditionally, nuts and saddles were made of organic bone, which is plentiful, durable, easily worked with hand tools, and can be polished to an attractive finished surface. Some vintage instruments even have ivory nuts—thankfully, that is no longer done! Bone remains the standard against which other materials are evaluated, and there is a widespread belief that it is still the best choice for tone.

However, many other more modern materials have proven themselves as viable alternatives. In the 1970s, brass nuts were very popular, and a well-cut brass nut can perform quite well. (Frets themselves are made of a brass alloy, after all.) Synthetics such as Corian, Delrin, carbon fiber/graphite, and other composites are increasingly used in both production guitars and handmade instruments, and they offer some compelling advantages compared to the old standard: they are easier to machine without chipping or cracking and can in some cases be molded to very close

tolerances, allowing for quicker and more accurate setups in a factory setting. Some nut materials also incorporate graphite and other self-lubricating materials, which help alleviate pinching and binding issues.

Finally, composite materials are much more uniform and homogenous—bone, as a natural material, varies quite widely in strength, density, and resilience, and not all pieces are guaranteed to make good nuts. For these reasons, many manufacturers have gone over to composites for these parts, with excellent results—factory setups on acoustic guitars have steadily improved in the last 15–20 years, which is great news for players at every level.

There is considerable debate among players about the effects of nut material on tone. The loudest voices in these discussions are usually those advocating for bone, and it's quite true that the classic American flattop tone includes bone nuts and saddles, however large their contribution may be. But there are countless factors that affect the tone of any given instrument, and many of them are much more significant: the properties of the top, back and side material, size and position of

the bracing, stiffness of the neck, and many more. Next to these fundamental properties, nut and saddle material make, in my experience, a relatively small impact—and in the case of the nut, an impact that is only heard when playing open strings. A great guitar will be great regardless of the nut material, and a poor one usually can't be saved by a magic piece of bone.

Ultimately, the nut setup is far more important than the material—a poorly adjusted nut will make a guitar difficult to play, hard to keep in tune, and impossible to intonate—and that will be far more noticeable than any little tone difference I can imagine!

A qualified luthier should be able to fine-tune the nut for your strings in relatively little time, and you will likely notice benefits to your action and intonation, as well as your tuning stability. These adjustments have possibly the most bang-for-your-buck of any investment you can make in your setup, and they will pay off every time you pick up the guitar.

Martin Keith is a luthier, repair and restoration expert, and working musician based in Woodstock, New York. martinkeithguitars.com

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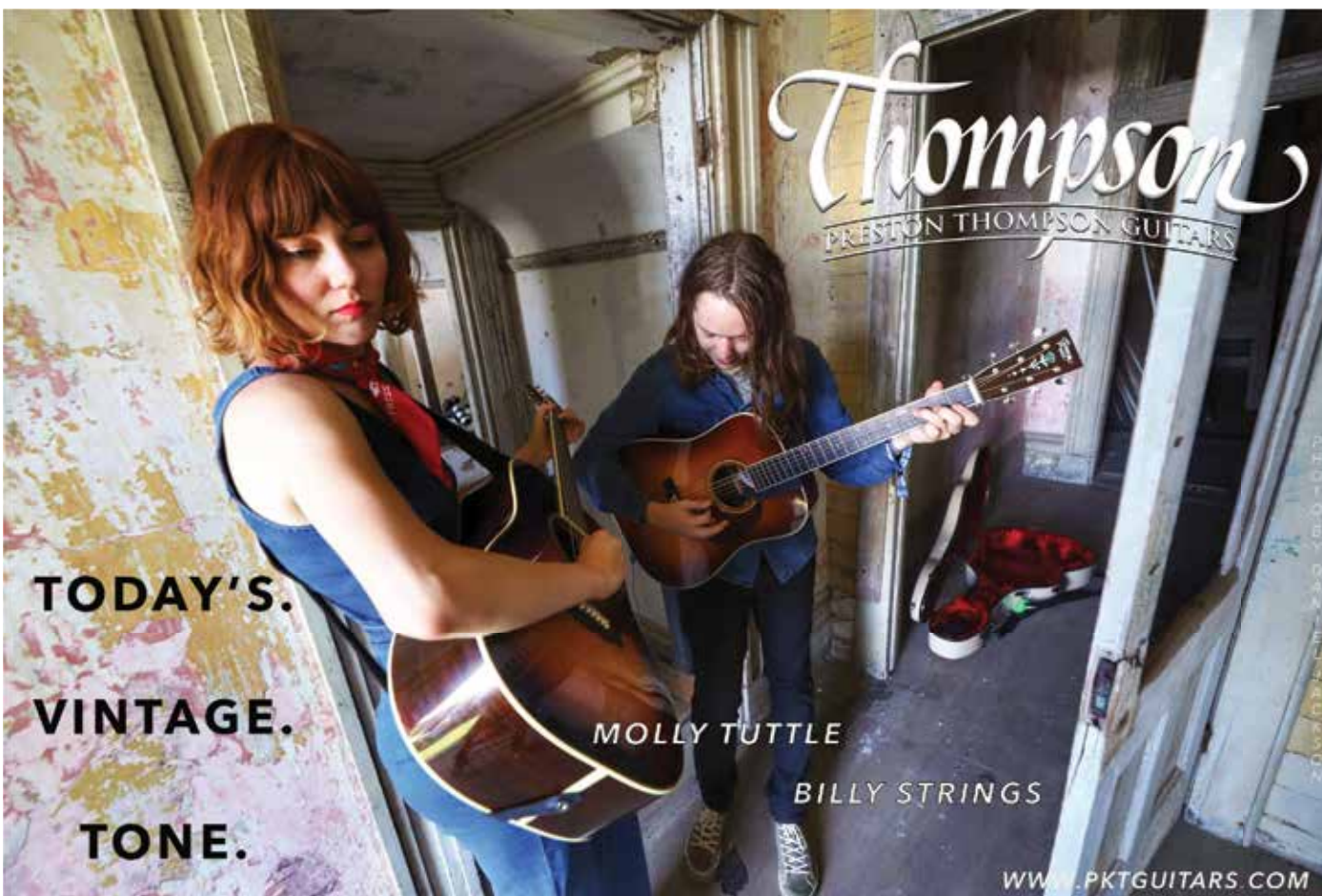
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Sheeran by Lowden S02

An affordable short-scale workhorse

BY GLENN KIMPTON

I doubt that it would have been long into the initial conversation between George Lowden, one of the world's most respected guitar makers, and Ed Sheeran, one of this decade's most successful pop artists, before both realized how appealing a deep collaboration would be. Sheeran's signature Martin guitars are already extremely successful, albeit aimed more at beginners than this new range, and the singer-songwriter does seem to have the Midas touch. And who better to partner up with than Lowden guitars? The reputation of the Irish company has always been exemplary, and Sheeran has already had the Wee Lowden model, designed for him as a gift from Snow Patrol frontman Gary Lightbody.

The Sheeran guitars all have select solid tops of Sitka spruce or cedar and five-layer laminated sides of walnut or Santos rosewood; they're built in Northern Ireland, just down the road from the main Lowden factory. The Wee Lowden, with its 24-inch scale fretboard, is the basis for the W half of this line, but here we have the slightly bigger S02, with a longer scale (24-4/5 inches) and Santos rosewood back and sides attached to a Sitka spruce top. The overall impression is one of solidity throughout and minimalist design focusing on function without superfluous detail.

BUILT TO LAST

Although using a laminated box significantly reduces the cost of building an instrument, it also provides a rigid structure that's far less prone to humidity issues, helpful for guitars designed to be small and suited to travel.

Laminated woods also weigh more, and the 4.2-lb S02 feels solid, well balanced, and comfortable to play seated for long periods, especially with the bevelled top edge of the body—a nice touch that demonstrates some neat build flourishes. The build is clean, with barely a blemish on the inside and just a minor flaw in the unbound side-to-back seam, but this is splitting hairs. The fretboard and bridge (with the tidy Lowden pin-less design) are reassuringly thick slabs of black ebony, with clean frets all the way down and perfectly cut nut and saddle. The tuners, which are chrome closed gear, work fine.

Inside the box, the woodworking is neatly done, with A-frame bracing for the top and none at all for the one-piece layered rosewood back, further demonstrating the company's faith in the rigidity of the five layers. The L.R. Baggs Element VTC pickup system is neatly attached to the neck block, with controls tucked just inside the soundhole and the wires clipped out of the way. The truss rod can be accessed beneath the small rosewood cover by the nut or through the soundhole, where it pokes out slightly from a thick laminated wooden strut in front of the neck block.

It all feels considered and built to last, yet quite spartan; as I said, there's no body or fretboard binding, and the soundhole decoration is the simplest of wooden rings. But this guitar does feel right for the purpose. Though the rosewood on display has an attractive streaked pattern set off by the thin satin finish that shows off the grain, the Sheeran is built to be used and not hung up on the wall.

BRILLIANTLY PLAYABLE AND STAGE-READY

What struck me once I sat and played is the resonance that runs along the spruce top and down the neck. For a guitar costing a little over a thousand dollars, of course, you won't find all of the features present on a Lowden, so the usual swanky and gorgeous laminated neck design is replaced by a simpler mahogany piece with attached heel. But the profile is slim and easy to use—ideal for beginner players or those with smaller hands—and the shorter scale also adds to the comfort.

There has also obviously been a lot of care taken in choosing the solid tops for this range. The spruce on this model has a straight, tight grain and is thin enough to sit on top of the rigid body and provide a clear, not overly complex but still pleasing, acoustic sound. The bass is fairly mellow, which is unsurprising considering the small dimensions, and the volume won't quite stand up to a dreadnought, but this box really does stretch out in the midrange and gives a lovely country-like quack when picked moderately



Sheeran by
Lowden S02

thickly. That short scale, coupled with Lowden's typically slim, fast neck, makes chording down it a pleasure.

When plugged in to a 1970s Music Man HD-130 amp, the S02's small body becomes less relevant—the L.R. Baggs system brings in ample bass on the bottom strings and a pleasing clarity across the board without intruding on the acoustic nature of the guitar. It also means this instrument is ready for the stage and would work for beginner musicians right up to professionals looking for a solid guitar to depend on.

In fact, there's a whole host of people out there who will favor the Sheeran by Lowden S02 as a workhorse and touring guitar, as well as one for the couch. Pricewise, slipping into the market above the Taylor Academy and Little Martin models and below something like a Larrivé P-03, this versatile guitar is well worth checking out. With its pleasing acoustic tone, high-quality build and materials, and good onboard electronics, it's an instrument that will satisfy on many levels. **AG**

SPECS

BODY S (small) body (14-3/4" lower bout, 4" deep, 19" long); solid Sitka spruce top with Lowden A-frame bracing; laminated five-layer Santos rosewood back and sides; ebony bridge; Tusq saddle with 11mm (.43") string spacing; satin polyurethane finish

NECK 14 fret, 24-4/5"-scale mahogany neck; slim C-shape profile; adjustable truss rod; bolt-on neck joint; ebony fretboard; 1-3/4" Tusq nut; chrome enclosed gear tuners; satin polyurethane finish

OTHER L.R. Baggs Element VTC electronics; Lowden light (.012–.053) phosphor bronze strings; gig bag

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Eastman DT30D

A double-top dreadnought with a mighty sound and appearance

BY GREG OLWELL

The mighty dreadnought has been an immensely successful guitar shape for decades, and it continues to be capable of great tone, feel, and volume. But that's not enough for everyone. Some power-hungry pickers want more clarity and rafter-shaking bass response—and they want to be heard. With these players in mind, Eastman created a bold new dread, the DT30D, which is part of the company's recent Double Top line, also featuring grand auditorium (DT30GACE) and orchestra (DT30OM) models.

Eastman's series is among the first to use the boutique-maker idea of a double top—a soundboard incorporating two outer wooden layers over a synthetic core, for enhanced sound and responsiveness—in a production steel-string model. (Read more about this in the sidebar below.) Double tops were first seen in high-end classical guitars, but if our review model is any indication, Eastman's use of this constructional technique shows great promise for the steel-string world.

A FULLY ENGAGING GUITAR

All that double-top technology would be meaningless if the guitar didn't engage the senses, and my tester made me want to play it from the moment I first opened the case. When I did, I was hit with the aroma and shine of the nitrocellulose lacquer finish; the eye candy of the body's herringbone purfling; and the pearlescent shimmer from the fingerboard, headstock, and rosette inlays. As a visual package, this guitar shines, looking familiar and also unique with its "hallelujah pattern" headstock and fingerboard inlays. The faux tortoiseshell celluloid pickguard has a bit of orange and yellow in it, giving it a distinctive look over the more reddish varieties. Typical of Eastman's attention to detail, the body's finish is flawless, as are all of the instrument's constructional aspects.

Armed with a few of my favorite picks, I dug in hard with garden-variety open-chords and was rewarded with the powerhouse tone typical of an HD-type guitar—bass-heavy with

scooped mids and lacey highs. The Eastman's low end was incredibly punchy, with a tight and defined clarity that encouraged me to both push it hard and go easy.

The DT30D has a lot of headroom, which certainly makes it a guitar for those who want to be heard in a group situation where some low-end thunder might help establish you in the mix, but it's more than that, as I found when I played more delicately. The lower notes poured out like a thick foundation under the melody parts. This carried over to fingerpicking when I played in standard and open-D and -G tunings with bare fingers and a thumbpick. The immediate responsiveness of the Eastman was really fun to explore and made me feel more confident with a thumbpick than I usually do.

EASY ON THE HANDS AND EARS

Given that the double top is something we're to think of as an exceptional feature, it would be impossible to attribute any of this guitar's strengths to this one component. But that's beside the point, because no amount of technology matters if the guitar doesn't sound and perform well. And the Eastman did. Like, really well. The setup made playing easy on both hands, while the neck's C-shape and satin finish made it a delightful place to spend time working on new material. And the tone was more like one from a guitar that you'd have to pay more for than the Eastman's entry fee will cost you.

After using the DT30D for a few weeks, in a variety of environments, I also found that it needed retuning much less frequently than most guitars. How often do you leave an instrument for a few days and return to find it still in perfect tune? That happened often during my time with the Eastman and it was an endearing trait to be able to pick up a guitar and start strumming without being greeted by sour notes.

For some shoppers, nearly \$2,000 might be a lot to spend on a guitar made in China (albeit by a team of dedicated Eastman luthiers). But for that cost, the Eastman DT30D rewards players with a snappy, loud guitar with the powerful bass-heavy tone of a rosewood dreadnought that punches above its weight and also dishes up oodles of visual appeal. You'd have to spend considerably more to get a guitar that compares to the tone, power, and looks of the Eastman DT30D, but you don't have to. **AC**

ALL ABOUT DOUBLE TOPS

One of the most important requirements in building a guitar is balancing the needs of a top that is strong enough to withstand string tension yet light enough to respond to a player's picking and strumming. Among the traditional choices available to guitar builders, spruce has an outstanding stiffness-to-weight ratio and it sounds good.

The idea of a double top is to engineer a soundboard that is stiffer and less dense than one crafted from wood alone, for a guitar with greater volume, tonal clarity, and dynamic response—without sacrificing sensitivity or nuances of tone. Though called a double top, this composite soundboard in fact incorporates three parts: inner and outer layers of very thin wood glued in a vacuum over a central core of a very lightweight polymer.

The concept was pioneered in the late 1980s by German luthiers Matthias Dammann and Gernot Wagner and created a sensation in the classical guitar world. (Read an interview with Wagner at ClassicalGuitarMagazine.com.) Double tops offer builders the opportunity to craft new tones by mixing types of woods on the inner and outer layers. Classical luthier Kenny Hill says that using cedar and spruce, for example, brings both sounds together into one instrument, with the outer layer seeming to dominate the tone. Some also claim that double-top guitars break in quicker, reaching their sonic potential sooner than those with traditional solid soundboards. —GO



SPECS

BODY Dreadnought with solid rosewood back and sides; Sitka spruce double top with Nomex honeycomb core; scalloped X-bracing; abalone rosette; herringbone purfling with binding; natural gloss nitrocellulose finish

NECK 25.4"-scale mahogany neck with "traditional even-C" profile; 20-fret ebony fingerboard with 12" radius and 1-3/4" width at nut; dual-action truss rod; pearl headstock and "hallelujah" fingerboard inlays; hand-rubbed nitrocellulose lacquer finish

OTHER Ebony bridge and bridge pins with abalone dots; bone nut and saddle; tortoiseshell pickguard; D'Addario EXP16 strings (.012-.053); gold Gotoh SX 510 open-geared tuners; deluxe hardshell case; 4mm truss rod wrench

MADE IN China

PRICE \$1,999 street
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Eastman
DT30D



Cort Gold Mini F

**A scaled-down budget guitar
with an Adirondack spruce top**

BY NICK MILLEVOI

I'm frequently drawn to short-scale guitars. Their small size makes it so easy to get around I feel like a supercharged version of myself that can play faster, better articulate my notes, and reach wider chord grips. While this makes these instruments fun to play around with, my enthusiasm usually wanes as their tinny tone wears me down and I just want to hear a big, open-position chord full of warmth and life—something these little guitars tend not to supply.

Of course, this is understandable: most short-scale acoustic guitars, such as the 3/4-size Cort Mini, are either meant for young students who will soon outgrow them, or are meant to be travel guitars that get put away as soon as you're back home with your old standby.

With the introduction of the Gold Mini F, Cort has given its entry-level Mini a serious upgrade, paying enough extra attention to detail to catch the eye of even a serious player looking for a fun addition to their collection.

ALL-SOLID CONSTRUCTION

Cort makes its intentions for the Gold Mini F very clear by selecting a torrefied solid Adirondack spruce top as this guitar's leading feature. Adi, as it's affectionally known, is the same wood used on highly-coveted prewar Martins. On higher-end modern instruments it's usually an expensive upgrade from the more common Sitka spruce. It's surprising, though very much welcome, to see this tonewood on an affordably priced, Chinese-made instrument such as this. Upon opening the case, I was immediately struck by how handsome this guitar is, mostly because of its attention-grabbing top.

Solid mahogany back and sides help give the guitar an elegant, vintage-style appearance, while gold-plated tuners and an abalone rosette supply just enough swank to strengthen the case for the Gold Mini F's upmarket aspirations without appearing gaudy or excessive. It's a sharp guitar that will catch some eyes if you take it out on a gig.

RESONANCE AND CHARACTER

Playing the Gold Mini F is fun and easy. With a 22.8-inch scale and 1-11/16-inch nut width, the neck is noticeably short, but it's easy to adjust and start maneuvering around without really thinking about it.



SPECS

BODY 3/4-size dreadnought; torrefied solid Adirondack spruce top with hand scalloped x-bracing; solid mahogany back and sides; black binding with triple-ply purpling; abalone rosette; UV finish

NECK 22.8"-scale mahogany neck with double-lock joint; Macassar ebony fretboard; 1-11/16" nut; die-cast gold tuners

EXTRAS Fishman Flex Plus EQ system; Macassar ebony bridge with ebony pins; D'Addario EXP16 strings (.012–.053); padded gig bag

MADE IN China

PRICE \$649.99 street

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The 3/4-size dreadnought body sounds like what you'd expect from a full-size dreadnought, just a bit scaled-down. Given the excellent wood selection, it should be no surprise that this is a resonant guitar with a lot of character, but it's unexpected how much it rewards digging in with a pick. While naturally lacking the deep, resonant bass notes of a gold-standard dreadnought like a Martin D-28, the Gold Mini F still has a pretty wide frequency range and punchy mids. And though I didn't try it myself, the way this guitar is voiced leads me to believe that Nashville tuning would really sing on the Gold Mini F.

Our demo model came set up and ready to go with light-gauge strings and low action that gave it some of the easy playability of an electric. Hanging out in first position and playing open chords, I found the tone full and balanced, while moving around the neck, I could easily imagine this guitar cutting through some other instruments with some Western swing-style comping. I had the most fun playing leads at the high end of the fretboard, where I was pleasantly surprised to find that bending notes was a breeze, even on the G string: a welcome departure from the stiffer action on my full-size dreadnought.

The Gold Mini F is outfitted with an onboard Fishman Flex Plus system, which features an under-the-saddle Soncor pickup and three low-profile knobs for volume, bass, and treble. When plugging in acoustic guitars with piezo pickups, I'm a big fan of using vintage tube amps for warmth and character, so I played the Gold Mini F through my 1970s Fender Champ. This opened up the guitar's sound quite a bit; it allowed access to a wide frequency range and granted access to those big bass frequencies that were lacking acoustically. It's easy to close your eyes and forget how tiny this guitar is once it's plugged in!

THE WRAP

The onboard pickup makes the Gold Mini F a solid asset to have around as an addition to a live rig or for home recording. If your set requires multiple guitars for alternate tunings, this little guitar would be a great way to lessen your gig load-in without sacrificing tone. Speaking of carrying it to a show, Cort sends the Gold Mini F in an upgraded case from the other Mini models. The included gig bag has thick foam padding with a heavy-duty reinforced neck block and padded back straps, so it's ready to get tossed in the back seat.

Ultimately, the Gold Mini F is an impressive little guitar that is outfitted to handle a variety of playing duties. It's affordable enough just for fun or travel, but it also sounds and looks good and has enough novel features to work it into your regular arsenal.

AC





Blue Ember Microphone

An affordable new XLR option for recording acoustic guitars and more

BY DOUG YOUNG

When it comes to capturing the sound of acoustic guitars, good microphones are worth their weight in gold—and this is most often reflected in their cost. Countering this trend, Blue Microphones has introduced the Ember, which at \$99.99 is the most affordable option in the company's line of XLR mics. Blue is known for its wide range of microphones, from the \$50 Snowball iCE USB mic all the way to the \$4,000 Bottle. The Ember targets those doing home recording, podcasting, or YouTube videos, and is a true XLR phantom-powered microphone that looks great and sounds as good—and even better—than some more expensive microphones.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The Ember is a small (14mm) diaphragm electret condenser mic with a cardioid (directional) polar pattern. Unlike many small diaphragm mics, the Ember has a side-address form factor—the sound is picked up from the side of the mic rather than the end. This can be beneficial in video applications; from a visual standpoint, the mic can be placed in a way that makes it fairly unobtrusive. In addition, the Ember is quite attractive, with a classy-looking bluish-grey matte finish, so you actually may want to feature the Ember front and center in your videos.

The Ember arrived in a sturdy cardboard box with foam cutouts for the mic and its clip, suitable for long-term storage. The mic is surprisingly heavy at .84 lbs., and it feels quite substantial and robust. It mounts to a stand with a somewhat unique threaded mic clip/swivel (included) that also feels sturdy and well-made. The clip allows the mic to be rotated freely—quite useful for fine-tuning the mic placement and sound—and then locked in place. Blue's optional S3 shock mount is also compatible with the Ember.

A RANGE OF APPLICATIONS

Blue recommends the Ember for use with vocals, acoustic and electric guitars, and even drums. As with all cardioid mics, the directional pattern rejects sound from the rear, making it useful in spaces that may not have optimal acoustic treatment, or where some isolation from other sounds is needed, such as recording multiple



instruments. Cardioid mics inherently exhibit a proximity effect, where the bass response increases as you get closer to the microphone. The Ember's proximity effect is quite noticeable and can be used to good effect if you'd like that big radio voice for podcasting applications. For recording vocals or guitars, you can use the effect to dial in the sound you want—just move closer for more low end, and back away for a more balanced sound. Although the Ember has a grill, an additional pop-filter would be very helpful for close vocal work.

The Ember's frequency response is flat within ± 3 dB throughout its frequency range. Although not as flat in an absolute sense as many pricier mics, the Ember does not exhibit any specific frequency anomalies, such as a broach presence peak or large bass roll-off. The mic is also flatter (± 1 dB) within the primary vocal range, which is also an important range for an acoustic guitar. As a result, it sounds fairly neutral and balanced. It has the ability to handle high volume levels produced by drums or electric guitar amps, and therefore has more than enough headroom for vocals or acoustic guitar.

TAKING A TEST DRIVE

I focused primarily on recording acoustic guitar with the Ember, because I am not a vocalist. In the often-recommended location, aimed at the neck/body joint of the guitar, about 16 inches away, the Ember sounded clear and balanced.

As with most mics, you can dial in a range of sounds by changing the mic position. For example, bringing the mic in closer and rotating a bit toward the soundhole produced a bigger, warmer sound.

The Ember's 19dB of self-noise (always a concern when recording quiet instruments) is roughly in line with other mics in its price range. Compared to other mics I own that cost many times as much, the noise of the Ember was evident, but not enough to be a problem. In most home recording environments, environmental noise is a far greater issue.

Using the mic for a vocal narration also worked well. The proximity effect was easy to hear; from two feet away, my voice was clear and natural, while moving it in five to eight inches produced that intimate "radio voice." I found that the mic's sensitivity and directionality worked well for picking up both voice and guitar, so with the right placement a single Ember could capture guitar and vocals and could easily be used to record YouTube lessons or demos.

THE WRAP

It can be challenging to find an affordable microphone that does a good job capturing an acoustic guitar, but the Blue Ember is an impressive option. It's definitely worth consideration if you are getting started with home recording, posting videos online, or just want to add an attractive, good-sounding mic to your toolbox. At this price, you might consider picking up a pair! **AG**

SPECS

Microphone type: 14mm cardioid electret condenser; 48-volt phantom-powered XLR

Frequency response: 38Hz - 20kHz (± 3 dB), ± 1 dB from 100Hz to 3kHz

Sensitivity: 12mV/PA

Output Impedance: 40 ohms

Maximum SPL: 132 dB SPL (1% THD)

Signal to noise ratio: 73dB

Self-noise: 19dB (A-weighted)

Off-axis rejection: 12.8dB (90 degrees)

Weight: .84 lbs

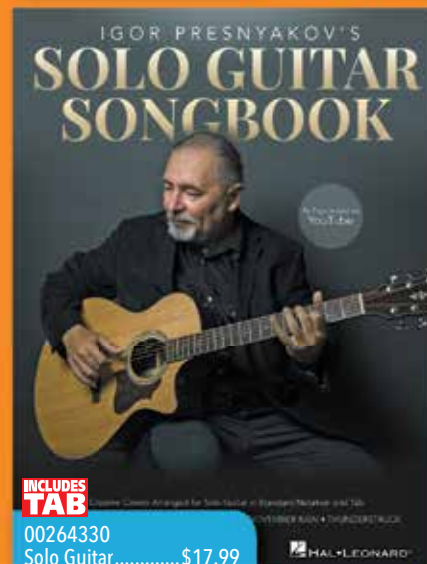
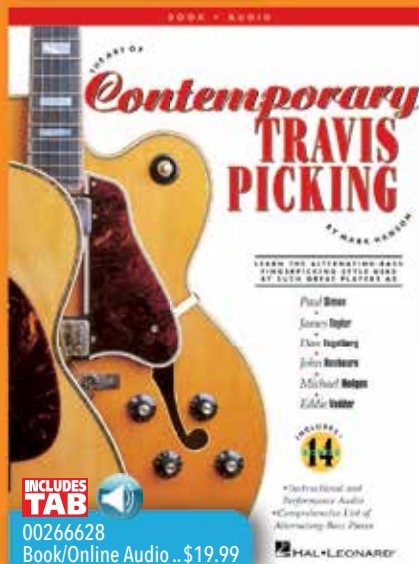
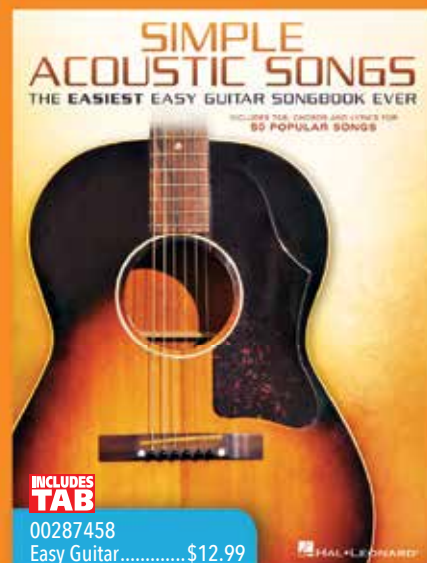
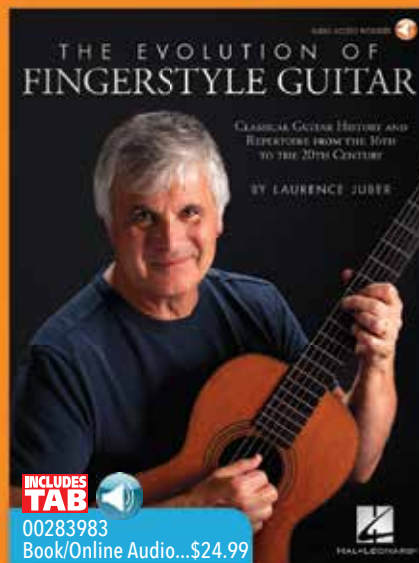
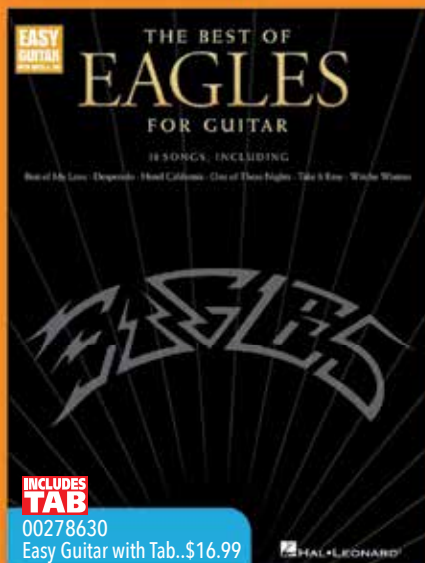
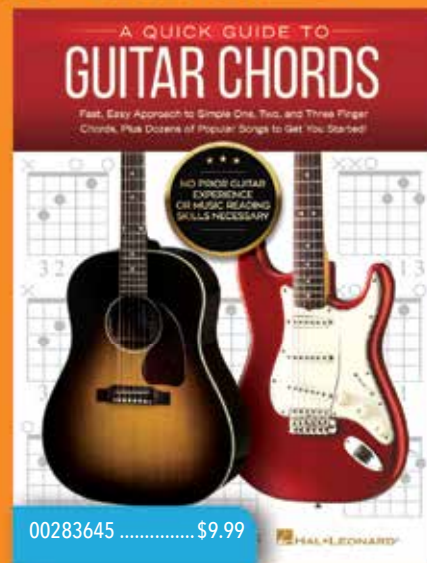
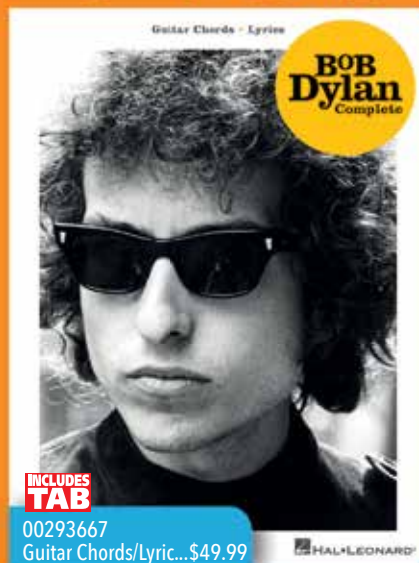
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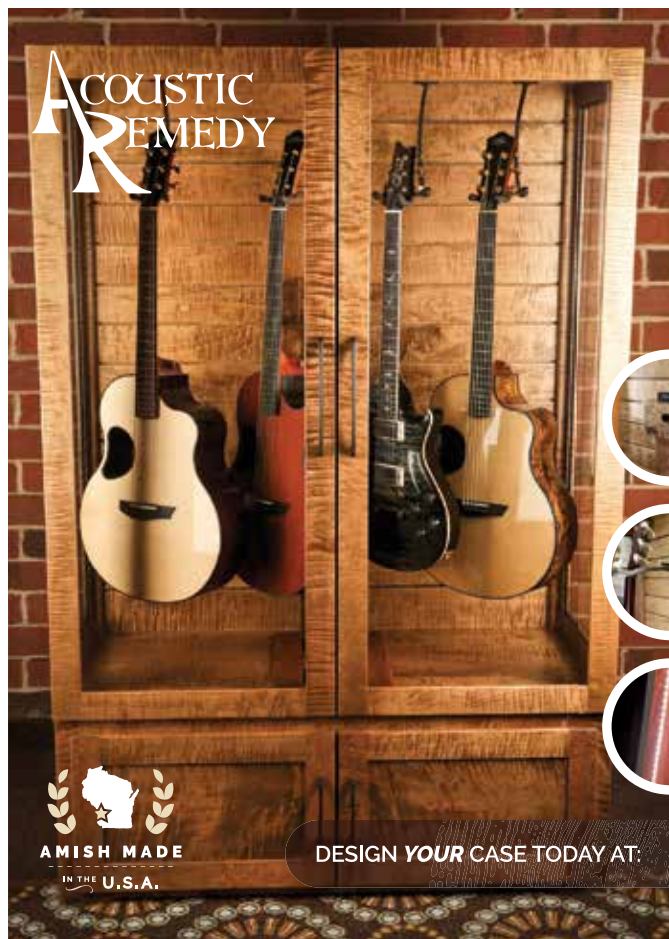
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Mary Flower
Livin' with the Blues Again
 (Little Village Foundation)

A Primer in Blues, Folk, Ragtime, and Gospel

Mary Flower brings jaw-dropping technique to vernacular styles
 BY DERK RICHARDSON

If *Livin' with the Blues Again* had been released in 1969 instead of 2019, Mary Flower might have been mentioned in the same breath as Stefan Grossman, Duck Baker, and other fingerstyle players of approximately her generation. Then again, maybe not, given the Old Boys networks largely in place in traditional music back in the day. Even now she doesn't show up on the Wikipedia page of fingerstyle guitarists. But Flower has never been much of a self-promoter, and the majority her records, about a dozen on small independent labels, were made over the past two decades. *Livin' with the Blues Again* provides 12 examples of Flower's prowess, as she moves seamlessly between seven original compositions rooted in Piedmont blues and ragtime guitar styles, five traditional blues and gospel tunes associated with the likes of Mance Lipscomb, Ma Rainey, and Reverend Gary

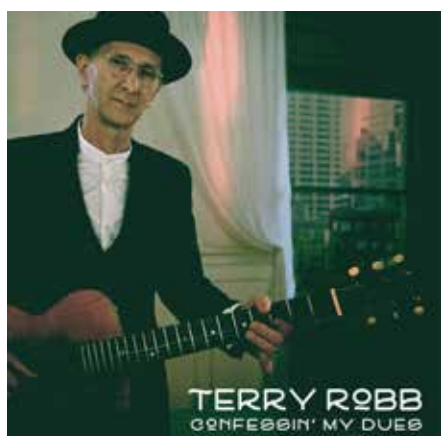
Davis, and "Left All Alone Again Blues," a ditty written by Jerome Kern and Anne Caldwell for the 1920 musical comedy *The Night Boat*.

Given free rein for her debut release on the San Francisco Bay Area's prolific Little Village Foundation label, the Portland, Oregon-based Flower put together a diverse program that reflects the eclecticism of her live sets. For those who like their acoustic guitar in isolation, Flower opens with her "Crooked Rag," just over two minutes of bouncy, intricate picking at a steady pulse. After introducing us to her warm, unforced singing and her sly way with words on "Baby Where You Been"—with harmony vocals by Lisa Leuschner and Suzy Thompson (who adds a couple of fiddle solos)—Flower shapes another solo gem, "Refuge," its gentle lilt leaning a bit toward the American Primitive tradition of Fahey and Basho. Other solo features, performed on a Fraulini Angelina guitar,

include the originals "Barrelhouse" and "Waltz" (see full transcription on page 92), models of concision (only one track on the album clocks in over four minutes) and precision, and evidence of why Flower is a two-time finalist at the National Finger Picking Guitar Championship.

In addition to Leuschner and Thompson (who also adds old-time jug-band flavor to "Left All Alone Again Blues"), guest performers from the Little Village Foundation cohort include Aki Kumar (harmonica), Kid Anderson (string bass), LVF founder Jim Pugh (piano), and harmony vocalists Dwayne Morgan, James Morgan, and Walter Morgan (aka the Sons of the Soul Revivers). Kumar and the Sons are especially effective at putting a Western spin on the leisurely paced rendition of "See See Rider," as Flower sculpts brilliant lap-slide lines on a 1949 Gibson HG-2 squareneck. Pugh and the Sons amplify the gospel optimism of "There's a Bright Side Somewhere" before the album closes with the elegant and poignant "Waltz." Mixed with what Pugh calls a midcentury sensibility, the album has a tightly centered focus, like a bluegrass band gathered around a single mic, rather than a showy, manipulated stereo soundstage.

Flower is a renowned guitar instructor, teaching at music camps and festivals, offering lessons via Skype, and frequently crafting articles and tips as a regular contributor to *Acoustic Guitar*. But she cannot be narrowly defined. *Livin' with the Blues Again* showcases her talents as a complete artist, deeply versed in an array of vernacular styles for which she demonstrates an abiding love that underlies her quietly jaw-dropping technique. She may not sing with the soulful grit and urgency of Rory Block, Maria Muldaur, or Bonnie Raitt, but her stylistic range is broader, approaching that of David Bromberg and Ry Cooder. What fun for those who don't know her music to discover her here. **AC**



Terry Robb
Confessin' My Dues
 (Niasounds)

Blues is never far away from this fingerpicker

With *Confessin' My Dues*, fingerstyle guitarist Terry Robb (born in Canada but a long-time denizen of Oregon) crafts a thumbnail sketch of American roots music in flux. Call this picture “several shades of blues,” because Robb draws on his inexhaustible palette of blues-infused picking styles including rough-hewn folk, crackerjack country, and swampy R&B.

Razor-wire Delta picking is prominent here, but it's only one strand in this collection's elastic DNA. Piedmont fingerstyle, bottleneck slide, and ragtime rhythms seamlessly conjoin with palm muting, hammer-ons, and pull-offs on “Butch Holler Stomp,” a tune that's too damn fun to be so complex. A slinky acoustic jazz solo slips through the spaces of a funky crab-walking beat on the aptly named “It Might Get Sweaty,” one of several tunes where Robb is accompanied by standup bassist Dave Captein and drummer Gary Hobbs.

On “Three Times the Blues” a tangled cross-picked scrawl tethers slow and languorous strumming to metallic bursts from Robb's resonator. The resonator returns, sashaying and panther-prowling through a thicket of slurred bent notes on “Still on 101.”

Just when you've got Robb pinned down to a template of interlocking rough-hewn roots rhythms and virtuosic fills, he mixes it up with a cover of the American Primitive staple “Now Vestapol,” co-written by Robb's former collaborator John Fahey. As fingerpicked crosscurrents eddy and whirl, Robb proves that he doesn't always have to peel off rockabilly pyrotechnics or rip through down-home barn burners to leave listeners breathless.

—Pat Moran



Ciro Hurtado
Altiplano
 (Inti Productions)

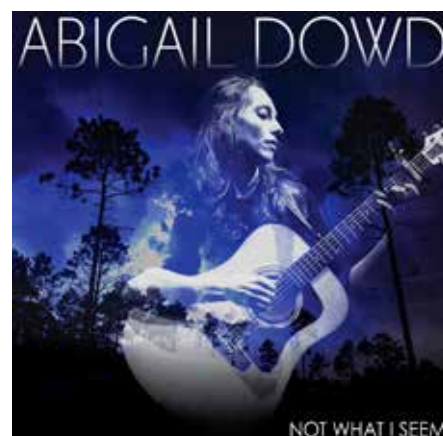
Guitar dominates on Peruvian's world-folk set

After moving to the United States from Peru in 1975, Ciro Hurtado rose to prominence adding a third guitar to Strunz & Farah's sound for several years and recording and touring as a member of the longstanding Latin American folk jazz ensemble Huayucaltia. Of the many albums he's released along the way under his own name, *Altiplano* takes a relatively minimalist approach to revisiting and reinventing the Andean music of his homeland.

The album opens with “Macchu Picchu,” an ensemble piece incorporating keyboards, bass, quena, zampoñas, bombos, shaker, charango, and Indian vocals by Siddhartha Belmannu. A similar grouping resurfaces on “Recuerdos,” with Mariel Henry singing lead in Spanish, supported by vocalists Libby Harding and Cindy Harding (Hurtado's wife). Lovely as they are, those tunes do not push much beyond the mild-mannered parameters of world-folk fusion. The rest of the album presents Hurtado's fine flamenco-, classical-, and jazz-influenced guitar work in simpler settings: four solo acoustic instrumentals, one duet with Cindy Harding on flutes and percussion, two trios with vocals (one by Cindy Harding, one by Alexa Ramirez), and a quartet with quena, cello, and shaker.

Those who were introduced to Andean music by the classic tune “El Condor Pasa” by Los Incas and Simon & Garfunkel, will hear enough zampoña (pan flute) to stir the memory, for better or worse, but it's Hurtado's pristine nylon-string picking that carries the recording, right through the laid-back cover of “The House of the Rising Sun” that brings the album to an unruffled conclusion.

—DR



Abigail Dowd
Not What I Seem
 (abigaildowd.com)

An introspective album of personal reflections and compelling stories

Spare, melodic, and episodic, Abigail Dowd's second studio album, *Not What I Seem*, is a turbulent travelogue through the people, places, and personas that define her past. The guitar-driven introspective folk of the 1970s is a touchstone, but so are blues and roots rock 'n' roll. Dowd's robust strumming and sinewy cross-picking propel most of these originals, anchored by husband Jason Duff's swooping bass and occasionally Bert Wilson's succinct and punchy drums.

On the title track, Dowd's remembrance of her time as an artist's model, she rejects being a mere object to behold, as her spiralling strumming dissolves like an unquiet dream. On “Old White House,” Dowd's dry alto free-falls through cloudbursts of wiry picking as she encourages her childhood self to push past the trauma of abuse. An emotionally distant, PTSD-ravaged grandfather is the subject of “Chosin,” a Celtic-tinged ramble with a sting like a scorpion's tail. Dowd examines the harrowing challenges of her firefighter brother's job on “Desire,” a propulsive folk rocker with a ringing whiplash riff.

The haunted blues “Wiregrasser” and the a cappella shanty “Silent Pines” bookend this collection with snapshots of an eerie landscape: Alabama's longleaf pine forests, stripped bare and plundered by the turpentine industry. Here, Dowd steps outside her own experiences to inhabit characters, and catapults past the personal to the universal. It reinforces her message that our stories and memories may inform us, but they are not who we are.

—PM



Molly Tuttle

When You're Ready

(Compass)

Dazzling virtuosity and confessional vulnerability

At 13 years old, Molly Tuttle released her debut, an album of bluegrass duets with her father. At 25, with one grown-up EP behind her, she was named Guitar Player of the Year by the International Bluegrass Music Association. Now, a year later, she's released the full-length *When You're Ready*, and it's every bit as good as anyone could have hoped.

Tuttle's cross-picking technique is nothing short of phenomenal. Her right hand is beautifully fluid, precise, and very fast, smoothly shifting between rhythm and lead without ever sounding showy. Her left hand is equally impressive, fretting rapid, unlikely notes up and down the neck and hinting at multiple complex chords at any given moment—and even with all this technical virtuosity, her chops never threaten to overwhelm the material.

Tuttle writes with a confessional vulnerability that places these songs halfway between singer-songwriter folk and country-pop, equally influenced by Laurie Lewis and Kathy Kallick. On “Make My Mind Up,” she's caught in a relationship that “feels alright/then feels all wrong.” With “Light Came in (Power Went Out),” an electrical blackout leads to an epiphany about life and love, and on “The High Road” she takes a romance to the point of no return. These are deeply conflicted, richly melodic songs filled with doubt but played with confidence by Tuttle, Rachel Baiman (violin), Brittany Haas (fiddle), Sierra Hull (mandolin, octave mandolin), and a cast of session players who accompany Tuttle on this journey of finding her own unique voice. —Kenny Berkowitz



Adam Palma

Adam Palma Meets Chopin

(MTJ)

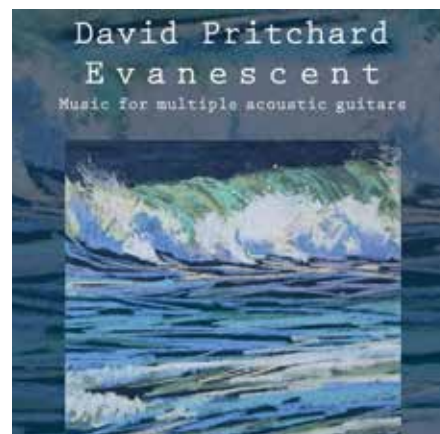
Chopin on steel-string guitar? Why not?

With *Adam Palma Meets Chopin*, Poland's greatest composer, who revolutionized harmonic content and textures for piano, finds the perfect interpreter in guitarist and fellow Pole Palma (who now lives in England). In transposing a selection of the composer's waltzes, preludes, and nocturnes to his steel-string Fylde Falstaff, Palma employs an approach no less radical than his inspiration. Who knew Frédéric Chopin could be so funky?

An insistent groove is present on most pieces, including “Polonaise in A major.” Changing the meter from 3/4 to 4/4, Palma augments the folk dance's triumphant mood with a strutting rhythm that entwines with bright, coiling picking. “Mazurka in F major” also makes the 3/4 to 4/4 time signature switch, with stuttering rhythms threading through a winding, spun silver melody. In contrast, the meter is unchanged amid the harp-like glissandos and filigree ornamentation of “Nocturne in E flat.”

Throughout the collection, Palma accentuates the structural complexity and emotional feel of Chopin's pieces, while counterintuitively following self-imposed guidelines. Playing primarily with a pick in standard tuning, he rarely employs a hybrid pick-and-third-finger technique. One outlier is the duet “Waltz in A minor,” where circuitous hybrid picking ascends as percussive strumming spirals downward.

By employing a modern rhythmic approach to these classics, Palma seems to be striving to introduce Chopin to a wider audience. Yet, by stretching the limits of these sprightly yet profound pieces, the guitarist honors the spirit of one of the most daring innovators of the Romantic era. —PM



David Pritchard

Evanescent

(Morphic Resonance)

Multitracked acoustics in meditative grooves

Evanescent's cover art depicts waves rolling, regenerating, and reaching for an unseen shore. It's a perfect illustration of the mutable nature of David Pritchard's music, bolstered by the title he's chosen for this collection of multitracked acoustic guitar compositions. *Evanescent* means “soon to be passing out of memory and existence.”

A former jazz guitarist, Pritchard has been mining a vein of intricately entwined guitars since his 1990 release, *Air Patterns*. Boasting ten trancelike yet energetic instrumentals, *Evanescent* is the apotheosis of Pritchard's methods and the magical worlds they conjure.

Spun from non-traditional tunings and shifting time signatures, Pritchard crafts an environment of pirouetting rhythms and ringing harmonics. Melodic moments flit through the whirlpooling plucked and strummed acoustics, breaking free like shooting stars before dissolving back into the firmament; yet the arpeggiated nets that Pritchard casts are porous enough to let in space and light.

Throughout, repetitive patterns circle and turn subtly. On the liquid and flowing title track, entwined skeins of picking and strumming pulse and flash like an unsteady beacon. Similarly, Pritchard's delicately picked cycles segue into ever-changing kaleidoscopic patterns on “Resin.” On “Tesserae,” a chiming and quizzical guitar figure spider-walks along a web of radiating harmonics, constantly changing course. Pointillist cross-picking transmutes into a strummed gossamer curtain on “River of Names.”

Evanescent offers constant discoveries. Its meditative grooves flicker and spiral until they start to stick in the brain, only to vanish and be replaced by newer patterns. —PM

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Mary Flower



SIDNEY SMITH/ABSOLUTE IMAGES

Waltz

An unintentionally jazzy new work for solo guitar

BY ADAM PERLMUTTER

Not long ago, Mary Flower sat down in her home, in Portland, Oregon, with her Fraulini Angelina and tuned the old-school-inspired guitar to dropped D. Though she wasn't intending to compose something new, she soon found herself following a melodic thread that took unexpected twists and turns. "I wasn't quite sure where it was all headed, but I kept after it until it made sense and I had two parts," Flower says. "It wasn't until months later when it was time to record it that I realized a third part was needed to complete the song."

The completed piece for solo guitar—"Waltz"—is heard on Flower's most recent album, *Livin' With the Blues Again* (see review on page 88). To play the composition, begin by

getting into dropped D. If you're unfamiliar with this tuning, it's easy: from standard, just lower your sixth string down a whole step, to D, such that it sounds an octave below the fourth string.

Dropped D is most commonly used for pieces in the key of D major, where the tuning allows for a big-sounding open-D chord with a low D, but "Waltz" is in G major. As is evident in the notation, the composition requires quite a bit of the fretting hand. But the good news is that a bunch of the shapes are moveable, and so things should fall into place once they're in your muscle memory. For instance, a diminished-seventh shape (fingers 1, 3, 2, and 4 on strings 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively) is shifted to various locations, like first position in bar 2 and

fourth position in bar 6, to form D7♭ sounds. And only one grip—an A minor shape (fingers 2, 3, and 1 on strings 4, 3, and 2)—is required for the D6–D♭6–C6/D move in bar 12 and higher up the neck in measures 23 and 24.

Harmonic moves like these lend jazzy effects to this rootsy piece, and if you compare the album version of "Waltz" (the basis for this transcription) to the video Flower prepared for AG's website, you'll notice a bit of improvisation in the details. But Flower admits any connection to jazz here is purely coincidental. "I really have very little jazz vocabulary," she says. "Most of the time I have no idea how the music comes from my fingertips while writing. It's not like I'm going for some genre or sound. It just happens!"

AC

Tuning: D A D G B E

Moderately ♩ = 100

♩ G

Chord symbols: G, D7 \flat 9, G, D7 \flat 9, G, D7 \flat 9, Em, A7, D, E7, A, D6, D6/D, C6/D, G, D7 \flat 9, Em, A7, D, E7, A, To Coda, A, C \sharp 7/B, A6, A \flat 6, G6/A, D.

Measure numbers: 6, 11, 16, 21.

Instructions: Harm.

WALTZ

Cont. from p. 93

26 F# D6 D6 C6/D G Bdim7

31 G/B C C#dim A7 D

36 G D7,9 Em A7

41 D E7 A D6 D7/F# G

46 D7,9 Em A7 D E7



A **D** **C6/G**

51

G **E^{dim}7** **D**

56

E⁹/B

61

A **D7** **D.S. al Coda**

66

Coda **D** **A**

69

B^b6 **Cadd9** **D**

71

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Shelley Park Modèle Elan 12

A pioneering builder updates the Maccaferri tradition for today's players

BY GREG OLWELL

Working out of her shop in North Vancouver, British Columbia, luthier Shelley D. Park has been dedicated to building Gypsy jazz-style guitars since 1994. At that time, she was serving as the rhythm guitarist for Pearl Django, one of the earliest acts in North America dedicated to carrying on the music popular in pre- and post-war Paris. Since then, she has focused on creating guitars that closely adhere to the plan originally set by Mario Maccaferri and Selmer and their followers, such as Favino. But instead of simply recreating instruments of the past, Park adds some of her own decorative elements and modern construction ideas, such as a soundport that feeds tone up toward the player's ears through an additional opening in the guitar's side.

Park's Modèle Elan 12 is based on Maccaferri's original Modèle Jazz guitar, a 12-fret design the Italian luthier developed for Selmer when the company went into guitar production in the early 1930s. These instruments, made only in 1932 and 1933, feature a large, D-shaped soundhole known as the *grand bouche* ("big mouth"), a 1.85-inch wide nut, and a 640mm (25.2-inch) scale length. They quickly found favor within the Gypsy-jazz community; when Selmer changed to a smaller oval-shaped soundhole and longer 670mm (26.378-inch) scale with a 14-fret neck, following Maccaferri's departure from the company, the Modèle Jazz became the preferred rhythm guitar.

The guitar seen here, #343, one of Park's most recent instruments, is customized with a few material and hardware changes. It has a European spruce top, koa binding, and big-leaf maple back, sides, and neck. While the original plans call for laminated rosewood back and sides and a walnut neck, Park prefers maple for its crisp, dry tone. Usually, Park adds soundports only to her smaller oval-hole guitars, but the musician who commissioned this particular instrument plays in a loud group and, like most guitarists, wanted to be able to hear himself better. **AG**



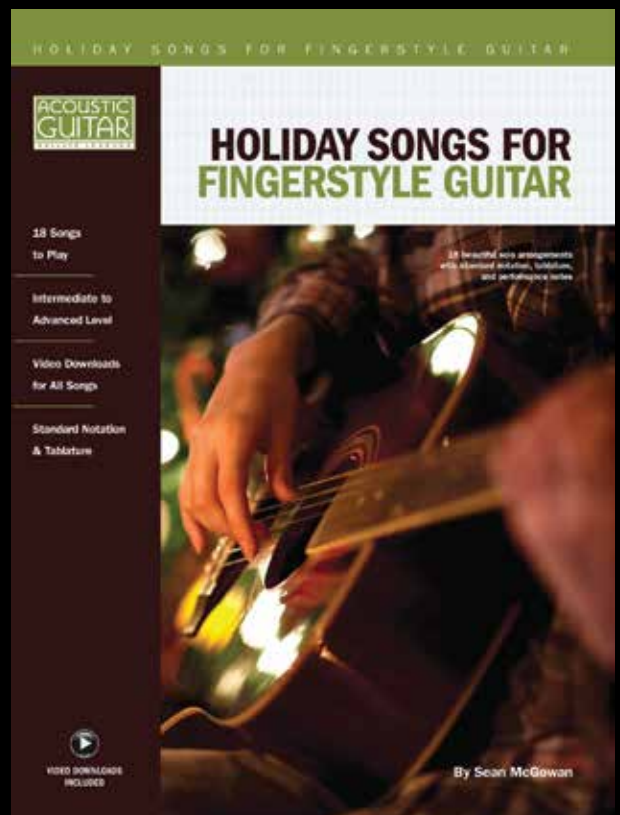
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